

# LAW OF INERTIA



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THE ANNIVERSARY  
AMERICAN NIGHTMARE  
CURSIVE  
DAG NASTY  
THE DAMNED  
THE GLASSJAW  
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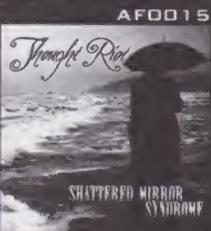


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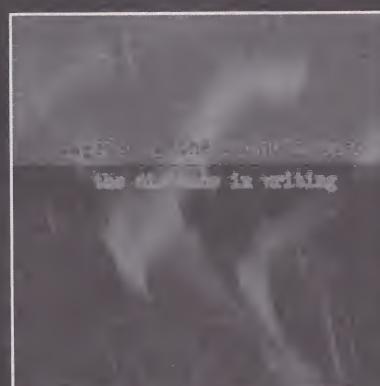
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# Law of Inertia Magazine

## Table of Contents

### Departments

Letters...	7
Photo Gallery #1...	18
The Buzz on the Bizz...	20
Hardwired...	21
Top Tens...	23
Photo Gallery #2...	136
CD Sampler Listing...	139
Book Reviews...	140
Video Reviews...	141
Zine Reviews...	144
Record Reviews...	148

### Non-musical Discourse

Unsatisfied...	10
Diary of a Madman...	14
Street Chic...	56
All Night Bowling...	116
The Recooling of Rage...	118

### Musical Mini Departments

Mates of State...	26
The Reunion Show...	26
The Gamits...	27
Haste...	27
Billy Music...	28
Avenged Sevenfold...	28
Brand New...	29
Denali...	29

### Kill Your Radio

Simon Brody's Favorite Records...	128
Fat Mike's Favorite Records...	128
Justin Brannan's Favorite Records...	129
Russ Rankin's Favorite Records...	130
Jonah's Favorite Records...	132
Death Cab's Favorite Records...	133
Engine Down's Favorite Records...	134

### Musical Discourse

Princess Superstar...	32
The Damned...	35
As Friends Rust...	41
The Aeffect...	46
Strife...	49
The Anniversary...	54
Cursive...	60
Sparta...	89
Shai Hulud...	65
Thursday...	72
Rye Coalition...	82
...Trail of the Dead...	96
Pedro the Lion...	99
American Nightmare...	111
The Glassjaw...	121
Warrant...	126
Dag Nasty...	105

# Law of Inertia

## Magazine

### Issue #11: Fall 2002

#### Hopeless at Anger Management:

Ross Siegel

>> Publisher / co-editor / art director / slave driver / penny pincher / tired Thinks Jonah needs sleep....  
E-mail me: [ross@lawofinertia.com](mailto:ross@lawofinertia.com)

#### Hide the Kitchen Knives:

Jonah Bayer

>> Co-editor / promotions / god of good ideas / reviews guru / the juice Thinks Ross does drugs  
E-mail me: [jonah@lawofinertia.com](mailto:jonah@lawofinertia.com)

**People With Pens:** Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, Leslie Simon, dup, Jake Futernick, Mike Ski, Heidi Diehl, Virgil Dickerson, Lauryn Siegel, Russ of Good Riddance, members of Engine Down, Chris of Death Cab for Cutie, Simon of Drowningman, Fat Mike of NOFX, Justin of Most Precious Blood, and Jonah of One Line Drawing

**People Who Hate Bad Records:** Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, du prospicio, Adam Parks, Jason Murphy, Nick Twisp, Jonah Brucker-Cohen, Celeste Tabora, Tyler Busey

**People With Cameras:** Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, Tim Owens, Sergio Cilli, Jerry Guzman, David Pujol, Ryan Russell, Dan Hollenbeck, Adam Sherrerd, Matt Gigliotti, Pat Lavery, Kevin Scanlon, Sarah Mamott, John McKaig, Dale Rio, Colin Germain

**Microphone Check** (commas and spelling errrs): Ross Siegel, Jonah Bayer, Lyndsay Siegel, Dean Prospicio, Bobbo, Leslie

**Cover Artwork:** Matt Owens for Independent Study Group Design; [mowens@independentsstudgroup.com](mailto:mowens@independentsstudgroup.com)

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**Wholesale / Distribution:** Wholesale copies can be obtained through Suburban Home ([suburbhome@aol.com](mailto:suburbhome@aol.com)) for \$2.50 a copy. Minimum order 5 copies.

**>> CD Sampler:** Heretofore, every issue of Law of Inertia will have a CD sampler included with every ass-kicking copy (we might even make a few more to give out at shows). If your band or a band on your label wants to have a song on that bad boy, e-mail us immediately and we will get you the details. Space fills up so damn quick it would make your head spin. Do not send a song if you are in The Strokes.

**>> Press Run:** 7500 ass-kicking copies

#### >> Back Issues:

#1-4 Soul Doubt  
#5 W/ Jimmy Eat World, Atom and His Package, Kid Dynamite, At the Drive-in, Bluetip, Brian McTernan.  
#6 W/ Saves the Day, Braid, Good Clean Fun, Time in Malta, The Grey AM, American Steel, AFI, Planes Mistaken for Stars, The Alkaline Trio.

#7 Women in Punk Issue W/ Indecision/ The Muffs, Le Tigre, Discount, Rocket-Fuel, Hit it or Quit it, Jejune, Co-Ed, Fiddler Records

#8 W/ Botch, Hot Rod Circuit, 6 Going on 7, Murder City Devils, Hum/National Skyline, The Faint, Poison the Well, Lifter Puller, Silent Majority

#9 W/ Godspeed You Black Emperor, Death Cab for Cutie, Hanging Like a Hex, Ultimate Fakebook, This Year's Model, Drowningman, Eastern Youth, Propagandhi, Glasseater, Dillinger 4, Tristeza, BS2000, Cave-in, Nora

#10 W/ The (International) Noise Conspiracy, Rocket from the Crypt, Rocking Horse Winner, Cadillac Blindsight, Strike Anywhere, The Q and not U, Henry Rollins, The Explosion, Rival Schools, Built to Spill, Tenacious D, Zero Zero, Anti-Flag, Slash, Isis, and way more.

Go to our website for more information on back issues.

**>> Review Policy:** The Law of Inertia review staff will consider all records (CD format is preferred), zines, movies, videos, books, and websites for review. Due to the boat loads of submissions we receive— and the intention of not

A friend and I were driving back to the city from a hippie festival in upstate New York the other day. At the festival, where such jam-band luminaries as Deep Banana Blackout, Max Creek, and Soulive played, I encountered more drugs and strung-out festival-goers than I've ever seen in my life. Even at my lowest point, the thought of ingesting something called a "mackie" or "MDMA" or liquid morphine was unthinkable. But those incorrigible hippies downed the stuff like it was water. It struck me how odd that whole subculture is and how I never ever could have related to it during my formative years when I got into punk rock. Nonetheless, the music—which was often described as "dank" by the hippies in attendance—would never be found on mainstream radio or MTV. Much of it was far too cheesy, far too arcane, and far too loosely held together to have distinguishable pop elements or hooks. And, I really liked this idea. It dawned on me that both punk rockers and hippies were in essence patronizing subcultures that were a bit too scary and unmarketable to ever reside in middle America. In our own ways we break the rules of convention and refuse to give in to what they insist on feeding us. I was happy about this.

But I digress.

On the aforementioned ride home to Manhattan, my friend and I decided that we hated it when people complained that there is no good music anymore. We hate it when people say that all the interesting sounds have already been made and all the important statements have already been stated. This is a cop-out. It's like saying there are no good artists anymore—there are good artists out there, plenty of them, but you just can't expect to find out about them if you're sitting on your couch all day long playing Playstation. This seems to me to be an essential point to underground literature and how the magazine you hold in your hand fits into that framework. There are tons of great bands out there playing many varied styles of music. Just because it doesn't make it to the jukebox of your favorite local bar or onto the playlist of your chosen college radio station does not mean that there isn't really good music lying just below the surface. Do you have the energy to dig down and find it?

Honestly, I'm not sure if I do anymore. When surveying the floor of my 8 x 20 room, I see Law of Inertia debris littering the expanse. I have a pile of uncashed checks right under my foot, a newspaper with a publicist's address scribbled upon it, millions of CDs waiting for review consideration, tape recorders, zip discs, guitars, zines, etc. Sometimes, like right now, I just don't have the energy to dig below the surface and seek out new music or art or entertainment. At times like this it's easier to simply throw on my old Bad Brains or Nirvana CDs and allow them to lull me into a state of calm, rather than nod off to the prosaic blast beats of the hippest metal band under the sun. It takes a lot of work to seek out alternative culture, even something as minor as listening to the CD sitting right underneath my laundry. And, after countless arguments with Jonah, scores of late-night hours spent ruining my eyesight in front of my computer, and yes, many many bad punk CDs spun on my stereo, I am ready to close the book on another issue of *Law of Inertia* and move on with my life.

I really don't know where the next few months will take me or this company. I just received my master's degree, I am unemployed, and the world is my oyster. All I can say is that I feel more passionately about *Law of Inertia* than I do any other endeavor in my life. I'm not sure what will become of this magazine—world domination and a quick death or two very very viable options at this point—but I can say that it's been an interesting ride. I hope you'll continue to ride with us a bit longer.

Fondly,

Ross Siegel

*This issue is dedicated to the memory of Rita Holman, a woman who loved me so much she kept every single edition.*

61 E. 8th St. PMB 125 NY, NY 10003

[www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com)

It's a pretty strange feeling— knowing that in nine hours you're not going to have a place to live. Don't worry, I'm not going to be out on the streets or anything. My lease just runs out at noon and in addition to mopping the kitchen and throwing my bags in the car, it's also time to wrap up another action-packed issue of *LOI*. I know we say this every issue, but for a while I really didn't think that #11 ever going to make it to the printer. When the school year began, I thought that my last semester of college was going to a breeze: endless parties, weekly orgies, and a laughable course load. Boy, was I wrong.

I feel like I can speak for Ross as well as myself when I say that this was one of the most trying eight month periods of my life. My classes took me everywhere from filming a School of the Americas protest in Ft. Benning, Georgia, to sitting in front of a Pro Tools station mouseclicking my own original music into the score for a short film. Oh yeah, I also did some writing here and there. Some of you may already know this, but in addition to my work with *LOI*, I also write for *Alternative Press* and have (or, I guess had) a weekly music column in Ithaca, NY's local weekly newspaper. What this boils down to is that this semester, I talked to strangers in bands more than most of my friends— and that's okay. Right now, all of my friends are out at a party while I'm at home, frantically trying to wrap up the latest issue of this zine— and that's okay too. It's okay, because no matter how much sleep deprivation I've suffered in the last six months, there is nothing I'd rather do than write down my feelings and have strangers all over the country read and possibly relate to them. It makes everything else seem trivial.

This summer, I'll be traveling on the Warped Tour (cue to start chanting the word "sell out"), working a booth and hopefully doing some writing. After that, who knows? What I do know is that aside from gaining our respective degrees this month, Ross and I poured our fucking hearts and souls into this issue. I drove to Cleveland to conduct a terrible interview that never went to press, spent countless nights eschewing studying to get in a few extra record reviews, and transcribed so many interviews that I thought carpal tunnel was going to end it all. But I'm still here, and instead of merely a diploma, I have over 170 pages of top-notch journalism to show for my efforts.

I know what you're thinking, "Will there be another issue of *LOI* now that you guys are out of school?" The answer is, I don't know...but I wouldn't be surprised. We may start producing them less frequently, but *LOI* is such a big part of our lives, I don't know what we'd do without it – aside from have more healthy social lives (speaking of my social life, to read all about it check out my column). Anyway, I gotta go. There are mysterious stains all over our carpet that I've been spraying with Resolve every half-hour and it's time for the next session. Thanks so much for taking the time to read this and keep turning the pages – it just gets better from here on out.

Devil's Horns and Power Chords,  
Jonah.

## Law of Inertia Magazine: breaking your guitar strings, slashing your van's tires; random debauchery.

### The Autumn of our Discontent

overloading each issue with reviews of pap— we cannot promise anything will be reviewed for sure. However, if we feel that the submission fits our format then there's a damn good chance that it will receive our comments... eventually. Note: please please please please please do not e-mail us to ask if your submission will be reviewed. That's really annoying and we hate writing reviews while annoyed and we usually give the object of our annoyance a negative review. It helps to put your CDs in a plastic baggy, or hey even a jewel case. CDs get scratched, you know. Oh yeah, don't bother sending us CD-Rs. They just get thrown away. You can't expect a review if you are too cheap to send a finished copy.

>> **Law of Inertia would like to think that these people appreciate us as much as we appreciate them (although they probably do not):** Ross' family, Ana Saldamando, Tim C. Holden, Mathew Wang (and his siamese twin girlfriend Danielle), dup dipshit, Jon Orren, Kate Goldstein-Breyer (see I spelled your name right), Nikki Fetterman, Sasha Harris-Cronin, Dan Frantic (still my favorite flake), Fred and Aaron @ Triple Crown Records (and Charlie Daniels, and the Nuge, and Rick ta Life), Geoff and Thursday, Matt Fox (my favorite freaky weirdo) and Shai Shulud, Adam Lindenbaum, Rachel Hill, Alana Cambell, Georgi Goldman, Susan Bernstein, Jerry Guzman, Jim Jazz, David Kaplan, Jake Futerick, Mike Ski and Brother's Keeper, LJ Fogel, Eric and Rumpshaker, Ryan Canavan and Hex, Vanessa @ Fat Wreck, Jackson Ellis and Vericide, Jay Murphy, Seth @ Negative Progression, Tyler Bussey, Cynthia @ Dischord, Offira Gabbay, Amy and Jay @ Fiddler, Bobbo, Virgil and Laura @ Suburban Home, Billy Music, the Reunion Show, Angels in the Architecture, Barb Adams (for making Jonah's writing gooder), Caroline Rodriguez, Annie Noble, Sarah Marnott, Kenny Berkowitz, Aaron Wilson, Mike Shea, Norman Wonderly, Jason Pettigrew, Dave Segal, Jonah's bandmates Joey and Sergio, Jay Simpson, Nick and Adam in Seattle, Steve @ Sub Pop, Mike Cubillos, Maria Blue Ghost, Kyle Rodgers, Jessie Tappis, Ghazal @ Rev, John Hoheimer, Shazila @ NLM, Darren @ Hopeless, Joan and Jessica @ Hopper PR, Eli Nowak (see, it's spelled right!), Vanessa Bayer, Ian Hofmann, my parents, Bizness, Celestronica (thanks

for the invaluable help with my column), Charlotte Sorock, Leslie Simon, Jason @ EVR, Micah Abrams, Sarah A. Sternau, Chris Walla, Gretchen Hansen, my buddy Ian Hardenburgh, Robb @ Saddle Creek, Bruce King, Heidi "What's the big" Diehl?, Jesse Mann, Jennie Boddy, Sarah Conroy, Kathy of Inertia, my parents, Melissa "stay black and die" Howard, Dave Stone, Chris Rager, Jeff Tweedy for all the help with long drives, my grandparents, the stoners at Stone Quarry, the girls who put me up in London, and Ithaca's finest bluegrass band: Cletus and the Barnburners for providing the knee-slappin' soundtrack for this list.

**No Thanks:** Jonah's upstairs neighbor who pounds on his ceiling when he tries to play music after 10 PM. Some guy in Kentucky who has Jonah's copy of Burn Collector. The girl in Ithaca who gave him Jonah's copy of Burn Collector. And anyone else involved in the Burn Collector conspiracy against Mr. Bayer.

>> **The editors of Law of Inertia** cannot be held responsible for any of the claims, concerns, comments, jokes, mishaps, mistakes, miscommunications, and mysteries held herein. We especially refuse to take any and all blame associated with Jake Futerick's love of holding big heavy balls while surviving on limited amounts of sleep and copious amounts of psychedelic drugs and alcohol in his system, Mike Ski's distrust of everyone and everything including anyone who doesn't like Henry Rollins' solo stuff like the great "End of the Silence," Tim Holden's predilection towards deviant behavior and little girls who are barely old enough to know what a good "cornholing" is, Heidi's love of food that comes straight from the garbage and her insistence that you too should eat food with bugs crawling on it. We will, however, take credit for the new Slayer record which is really good, the recent revelation that the (International) Noise Conspiracy have sold out beyond return, Ben Affleck's violent and painful death at the hands of Nick Powers, and New York City being dope. If you are ever curious as to how Law of Inertia got to be so freaking cool, just go down to the corner of Canal and Broadway and ask the Romanian-refugee looking woman that hangs out there day and night. She'll fill you in. We promise.

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Is a dream a lie if it don't come true, or is it sometimes worse? -the Boss

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# Letters

Dear Industry Professional,

My name is Calvin M. Stemley and I lead a band called the House of Soul. We need your help in the promotion and marketing of our CD. Our band offers a diverse listening experience. If you like slow ballads there are three on the CD. For listeners that like upbeat dance music you won't be disappointed either. The listeners that love that downhome funky sound you too will enjoy our CD. Please take a minute to click on the above caption and view our website. After you have learned a little more about us please click ORDER SLAMMIN CD NOW to hear selections from the CD. Please contact me at stemtec@aol.com to assist me in the promotion and marketing of the CD.

TANK YOU AND GOD BLESS

Calvin

[http://calvin\\_stemley.tripod.com/houseofsoul/index.html](http://calvin_stemley.tripod.com/houseofsoul/index.html)

Dear Calvin,

Thank you so much for your kind e-mail to make us aware of your band. It gives me nothing but pleasure to have a very wide variety of music covered in *Law of Inertia* and I am so happy that you directed me to your website. I must admit, I thought you were kidding when you told me your band was called House of Soul as it bares a striking resemblance to the famous nightspot, the House of Blues. But, when I checked out your site I realized that not only were you serious, but you think *LOI* needs to cover more music a la Otis Redding (or Lionel Richie as the samples of your music would have it) than Shai Hulud, so maybe in future issues we could do an interview or something. I would definitely like to ask you how it would feel to be the only band ever to appear in the pages of our humble magazine that wears white tuxedos to every show. Furthermore, I'd love to chat about the fact that a whopping four of you have surnames that are actually real words (e.g. Carl King, Joy Brown, Wayne Barber, and Keith Flowers) instead of something like Jones or Johnson, which don't mean anything. Lastly, I was convinced that your failure to put the word "the" before "slammin" was a mistake but then I realized that your CD really is called *Slammin CD*. What a clever title! So, anyways Calvin, we obviously have lots to talk about. Gimme a ring on my celly and please let me know when you're going to be in town.

GOD BLESS YOU TOO MY FRIEND!

Law of Inertia

Ross,

I just saw the copy of your new issue that Thursday had 'on tour with them. It is seriously the most amazing zine ever! All of our favorite bands: Tenacious D, Rocket From the Crypt, Rival Schools, Fucking Champs, Q and not U, are you kidding?! Incredible! Thanks again. It's a book,

so I still haven't finished it. It's being passed from van to van!

xxoo

Bob Nanna

Bob,

Thanks so much, that's so nice of you! It almost makes me feel bad that we didn't like your new record more (it's not bad at all, just wasn't as good as Braid's last stuff). Anyways, yes, we've had a fantastic response to the new issue, and pretty much every person I give the zine to at shows mentions something about issue #10 being a book. We always knew we had a good zine-- our egos are pretty formidable-- but the things people have been saying about our zine over the last few issues blows our mind. So thank you so much for reading and being a part of this.

ooxx,

Law of Inertia

Ross,

Your magazine is AMAZING. I am more than thrilled to receive such an incredible piece of work. QUINTUPLE KUDOS TO YOU. I am doing a Leif Garrett interview in an hour -- want it for your next issue?

\_wal

\_wal,

Thanks so much for the kind words! It is good to hear from a guy who obviously thinks big and writes bigger. You should talk to my man Calvin over there in the upper-left corner of this page-- you guys both love capitalizing your hyperbole. Anyways, as for a Leif Garrett interview, that's so sweet of you but I'm gonna have to pass. When it comes to washed up teen icons we much prefer Slash, Sebastian Bach (who we may be interviewing soon), and any of the older punk bands on Hopeless Records. But thanks for the offer.

\_lawofinertia

Law of Inertia,

Yes, I'm a big fan of your publication. But, I was wondering how you could possibly employ a co-editor who apparently has such poor faith in Revelation by prematurely rejecting the latest sensefield album, *Tonight and Forever*. In fact, I heard Jonah refer to this album as "the worst album of the year." That is some bullshit. I think he should be fired. Sensefield is a quality band. they deserve your support. Jonah: Maybe you should give the album another try. It just may be the case that it's brilliance was too subtly intense for your cheap fast-food tastes. GNR is small fries, dude. Sensefield is a supersized meal deal. You might have to wait a little longer, but they will fill you up with love darlin.

only love.  
mz.liz.

Lizzie,

Um, what do you think? Should I fire him over a comment he made about Sensefield? Well, if so, I'd have to fire myself because that album was very poor indeed. If you think Jonah's claim about that album is bad, check this out: Ross says that the new Sensefield album is so poorly mixed, he could have a done a better job if he had mixed it on a Speak-and-Spell. And that is coming from someone who kept their EP on Grape OS in his stereo for over a year straight.

Thanks Lizzie,  
Law of the Land

To LOI,

I'm writing to you guys from Perth, Australia and would like to tell you that I think your zine is fucking excellent. I absolutely love the american punk-rock scene, and must admit that whatever we have of punk here, is very soft-core. The bands that I am into... well they don't even sell 'em in CD stores here at all, so I've turned into a bit of a geek with the internet shopping, hehe thank god for the internet! I would love to subscribe to ur zine (please tell me that #10 is not the last issue!!!) but unfortunately I live outta the states and across the globe. So that makes it kinda hard. Is there any possible way I could subscribe? I would also like to ask if you could let me know if and when there are any acts coming over to Oz. I cant wait till I have enough money to come and visit the states, now that's a trip worth waitin' for. I want to thank you for a great read, it seriously is one of the best zines I have ever read, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I hope there is more to come, please mail me back..

Karina:)

Karina,

Wow, thanks for the kind words. I think you're the first person to write us from Australia. It is so nice to know that people in "Oz" read our zine even if some of our best friends here in the US would sooner read their high school math text-books then finish one of our humble issues. Anyway, If you're reading this response then it is safe to say that there is more to come. We hope this is the best issue yet. We think it is. Jonah and I have worked out asses off to make this issue not only memorable but a milestone in our zine careers as well. So, please enjoy it and tell all your friends in Oz about punk and about how *Law of Inertia* (dis)affects punk here in the States.

Thanks!  
UThugs



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# unsatisfied

by Ross Siegel

My column in the past ten issues of Law of Inertia has mainly focused on me me and me. I usually write about my sex life or how I hate working at dumb jobs or some other self-centered flight of fancy. But it's my column and I'm supposed to voice an opinion so I do. However, after September 11<sup>th</sup>, my news-mining personality has been reinvigorated. A political side I never knew I had has emerged. Thus I find myself galvanized to tell the world a few things I know that they may not.

What I'd like to talk about this issue is "A few reasons why you should be mad at George Bush's cabinet appointments." Recently it was released that the Bush Administration has substantial evidence of an imminent attack by Osama bin Laden on American soil in the days leading up to that September day. It suddenly occurred to me that the Bush Administration—for all their current fame and public support in a time of war—has had a rocky road for the past year and a half. I decided to look into the matter and investigate what else there was to criticize in Bush's cabinet. I found a whole lot of juicy stuff, some of which is below. Read on, you may just find out that not only are the members of the Bush cabinet some of the most affluent people in politics, but their corporate ties are almost unfathomable and scary. Similarly, many of the top positions at the various departments within the executive wing of the US government are filled by people who fight for some very dubious policy decisions. This is scary, but a sign of the times.

#### **John Ashcroft, Attorney General:**

John Ashcroft is, in many ways, George Bush's answer to pleas from the far right for the President to place one of their own (a very conservative Christian) in his cabinet. There were many red flags before Mr. Ashcroft's appointment raised by Ted Kennedy indicating that the future attorney general would be a dubious choice for the highest law-enforcement post in the nation. Not only did he oppose hate-crime legislation as a senator in Missouri, but he vigorously opposed the appointment of Ronnie White, who would have been the first African-American judge on the Missouri Supreme Court; he also fought appointments to judicial and executive positions for many candidates who supported women's, homosexual, and abortion rights; he consistently and aggressively opposed the appointment of women and other minorities to executive and judicial positions; he fought vigorously for the universal availability of guns; and he fought ardently to make abortions harder to obtain. Nonetheless his nomination was accepted and he is now the man who controls every FBI, police, and DEA investigation in the nation.

Before September 11, Mr. Ashcroft seemed to have no heart in his job—often taking four-day

weekends in Missouri—and no interest in developing his own agenda during his tenure. After September 11<sup>th</sup> we have an entirely new John Ashcroft, one on a mission to transform the justice department's goals of prosecuting the guilty and protecting the innocent to simply prosecuting everyone. It has been widely reported how Mr. Ashcroft ordered the constitutionally illegal detention of at least 1,200 Muslims residing within the United States borders with little or no basis as to their relation to terrorist activities; how he told a senate subcommittee that anyone who got in the way of his work was aiding terrorism and thus not a true American; his unprecedented restriction of the freedom of information act, giving journalists little to no access to information sources that are not supposed to be closed; and how he convinced the President to allow secret military tribunals which would allow the executions of presumed terrorists without due process of law. But, he ordered raids on marijuana clinics in California—serving cancer patients—with immense fierceness; he has reversed long standing justice department positions on affirmative action; he has taken great pains to relax restrictions on the FBI spying on religious and political organizations; and signaled a willingness to give big business breaks on anti-trust cases.

John Ashcroft has his own ideas of what makes for American justice and what American ideas of equality should be. Certainly, he will go down in history as being the most aggressive, if not fascist, government employee since J. Edgar Hoover. Ashcroft's butchery of the fourth amendment should be a disgrace to anyone that believes that all men and women are created equal and that sexual orientation or religion does not make a person automatically a suspect.

Finally, Ashcroft has an exceedingly poor environmental voting record and is openly hostile to most environmental laws. Ashcroft voted against additional funding for environmental programs including the Clean Water Action Plan and toxic waste cleanups at Superfund sites. He also voted for a bill to roll back clean water protections, to prevent the EPA from enforcing arsenic standards for drinking water, and to allow mining companies to dump cyanide and other mining waste on large areas of public lands next to mining sites.

#### **Karl Rove, Presidential Counselor:**

One could make a very convincing argument that the Clinton administration did not always act ethically, but did, however, do what they believed to be right. Such is the case with the United States involvement in Kosovo. Karl Rove, the man who engineered George W.'s political rise, is a self-proclaimed hard-liner. Take that term as you want but I see it to mean he doesn't budge an inch on anything he feels strongly about (and thinks the President should feel strongly about.) It is

common knowledge on Capitol Hill that Mr. Rove is the administration's key to the GOP's money bags. He is the one they send out on the big fund-raising missions, and similarly he is the most obvious example of a member of Bush's cabinet who manipulates their decisions to serve its best interests. If the Clintonians tried to do what was right, Karl Rove seeks to do what will be best for the Republican party and the chief executive.

#### **George Tenet, CIA Director:**

As American envoy to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict George Tenet had little to no effectiveness, seeing his cease-fires repeatedly abused and American demands consistently ignored. As an intelligence gatherer he has been abysmal, his greatest failure coming just as the conflict rose to its greatest heights. Some might argue that his embarrassment over his handling of the credit of Yasir Arafat's aide Jabril Rajoub is the worst scandal at the CIA since 1985 when then CIA chief William J. Casey saw a fully-briefed KGB informant defect to the Soviet Union on him. In this case, Tenet had been telling his bosses in the Bush administration that Rajoub's "office of preventative security" in the Palestinian Authority was a fully reliable proponent of the peace process. Tenet and his spooks overlooked the mortar cannons and AK-47s stashed all over Rajoub's offices and the fact that members of Hamas were being armed by Rajoub. Only recently did Tenet realize Rajoub's connection to Palestinian bomb-factories and the fact that Rajoub was in no way a friend to the peace process. Tenet finally had to admit that his main enforcer or civility in Gaza and the West Bank had no interest in seeing a peaceful resolve to the situation. Perhaps diligence wasn't in the version of the job description that Mr. Tenet read.

#### **Spencer Abraham, Secretary of Energy:**

Despite being the only American of Arab descent in the senate, Mr. Abraham has done little to improve the nation's power plant security. Not only have many of the nation's key nuclear power plants been found unable to withstand an aerial assault, from a plane for instance, but security at most nuclear plants has been found to be hopelessly disorganized and ineffective. In recent semi-annual security drills at nuclear plants around the nation, 73% of energy plants not only failed in their drills but subsequent reports indicated that terrorists could easily build a small nuclear weapon made with a basic knowledge of nuclear physics and modern engineering tricks. Although the press and the senate have been blowing the whistle on power plant security for some time now, the Bush Administration and the Department of Energy have insisted that power plant security and maintenance is better than ever. This is clearly untrue and the powers that be would benefit more from improved security measures than skirting the issue.

In defense of Mr. Abraham, the White House is being extremely difficult and is making his job a task indeed. On March 14, the White House chopped off over 90% of the requested funds the energy department needed to safely protect and store hazardous nuclear waste. Apparently the White House never considered that plutonium is easy to come by for terrorists when there are no funds to buy new fencing to put around dump sites (a main feature of the budget proposal). Oh yeah, Abraham proposed cutting more than \$600 million from funding for solar, hydrogen, biomass, geothermal and wind energy research ("green" sources of energy), all of which faced major cuts from current levels.

Abraham led the Senate's efforts to prevent the Clinton Administration from increasing fuel economy in cars and light trucks. He co-sponsored two separate bills that would have allowed drilling for oil in the fragile Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He also voted to kill an amendment that would have added \$62 million to the Energy Department's solar and renewable energy programs from being considered by the full Senate, and he voted to delay reforming the way oil companies pay royalties for drilling public lands. Abraham also supported establishment of an above-ground "interim" nuclear waste dump near Yucca Mountain in Nevada, which the Sierra Club opposed.

What is perhaps most bizarre about Mr. Abraham is that in 1999, Abraham sponsored legislation that would have abolished the Department of Energy.

#### **Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior.**

Ms. Norton should have raised many red flags in congress before her appointment based on the fact that her first job in public service at the Mountain States Legal Foundation, a conservative think tank that opposes the government's role in environmental protection—a strange job for a woman who would be in charge of much of the United States' environmental policy. Unpopular with many environmentalists, Norton prefers free market solutions to environmental problems rather than regulation and enforcement. Working under Reagan's Interior Secretary, James Watt, she advocated opening up the protected Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration, a method of energy development which the Bush Administration continues to explore despite reports that there is only six months worth of oil up there. Plus, the potential environmental devastation is enough to make any other Interior Secretary an embarrassment. As a matter of fact, Norton seems to be wholly pro-business and anti-environment in almost every region in America except for the Florida Everglades where the Bush Administration is fighting ardently to upkeep environmental practices. Can you guess why? The answer is that the Florida proved to be the key to the last election for Mr. Bush, it very well

might be in the next so there's no sense in alienating Floridians who voted for Ralph Nader's environmental focus a second time around.

#### **Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense:**

When George Bush assigned Rumsfeld to be the director of the Pentagon he signaled that he wanted an experienced veteran of the Department of Defense to sell China, Russia, and Congress on a highly dubious missile shield that could end up costing the American people as much as \$240 billion and might not even work under normal conditions. To explain why the missile shield may be impossible to build up to acceptable standards would take a crash course in modern astro-physics, but let's just say that fooling a missile shield by hurling random objects into the sky alongside a real missile would be a piece of cake for a nation like Iran or North Korea. Plus, every time the Pentagon tests their missile shield it costs taxpayers \$100 million. Despite experts at every university in the nation saying the missile shield might never work properly, the Pentagon remains enthusiastic after four successful—yet technically unrealistic—tests in a row recently. Mr. Rumsfeld appears to be leading the charge for the pro-missile shield camp.

I find two other problems with his performance: 1) On orders from President Bush to refine the military and make it more versatile Rumsfeld has begun to focus his vision of what the military should be. Specifically, he and others see the days when the floating bulls-eyes known as aircraft carriers are no more, but rather super elite fighting forces like the Army Rangers, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain divisions become super-organized, super stealthy, highly computerized, eerily efficient fighting units able to achieve maximum penetration in any climate or location in the world. Some may find the space-age weaponry (some of it sounds like the most fantastic stuff of Star Trek) and organization the future military will possess exciting, I find it scary. Now instead of battles where America fights face to face with enemies as the world watches on, the US' fighting forces will be so secretive that wars aren't even noticed anymore. I see this as a detriment to peace and a way of making the world a more violent place—especially if no one even knows about that violence.

2) Donald Rumsfeld should be pushing George Bush to maintain a substantial amount of military personnel in Afghanistan and surrounding regions. After the Balkan war it was US and NATO troops who assured that ethnic cleansing did not return to the region—we Americans must do the same in Afghanistan to ensure the protection and stability of a new, untested Afghani government and to hold off warlords outside of Kabul. Right now Rumsfeld isn't pushing hard enough and the US is set to all but hand over the entire nation to the

British who have no incentive to stay in the region for the long haul. We all know the Bush administration hates the idea of nation building, but we've already seen what people in the middle east can do if they live in places of chaos and tumult. Let's not see Afghanistan have to weather future storms alone!

#### **Misc. Reasons why the Bush Cabinet does not speak for the average American:**

- Commerce Secretary Donald Evans, a longtime friend of George W. Bush, holds 940,000 options to buy stock in Tom Brown, a Denver-based oil company that he headed before his cabinet appointment. Evans' financial disclosure statement listed his options to be worth between \$5 million and \$25 million.

- Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill is another extremely wealthy former CEO with a leading role in the Bush administration. The former head of aluminum maker Alcoa initially balked at selling off his \$100 million in company stock and stock options, claiming he saw no potential conflict of interest. However, in an action that could directly benefit Alcoa, the Treasury Department recently decided to allow the financially pressed Bonneville Power Administration, which supplies electricity to Alcoa smelters in the Pacific Northwest, to reduce its payments to the government for dams and other infrastructure.

- Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who was chief executive at the pharmaceutical company G.D. Searle and later headed General Signal Corp., has financial holdings in stocks and other investments that are worth between \$50 million and \$210 million, according to his financial disclosure statement. Nearly half his fortune is tied up in private investment partnerships, including venture capital funds that invest in health care, energy, the Internet and biotechnology.

- Colin Powell, Bush's secretary of state, was a former board member of America Online. His stock portfolio is worth between \$18 million and \$65 million. He has agreed to sell his stock in 31 companies, including holdings in General Dynamics and Brocade Communications Systems worth more than \$1 million each. He is also divesting holdings in Cisco, JDS, Uniphase and EMC worth between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

- Mitch Daniels, Bush's director of the Office of Budget and Management, was a top executive at the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly. He listed the value of his Lilly stock at between \$5 million and \$25 million.

- Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser, served on the board of directors of Chevron Oil from 1991 to 1993. The company named an oil tanker after Rice.

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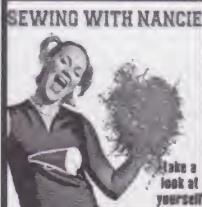
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# Diary of a Madman

by Jonah Bayer

In my first installment of *Diary of a Madman*, I was a struggling white rapper. Then, I was a glam-metal groupie. Next, I was trying to pick a career. Now, a week after graduating with a degree in television-radio from Ithaca College, I'm not nearly as upset to leave the town where I spent the last four years as I think I should be. Sure, I'll miss getting seitan subs at four in the morning, or going to the gorges for late night swimming sessions. But as far as people go, it's not going to be as "hard to say goodbye to yesterday" as Boyz II Men made it sound. When my ex-roommate asked me if the inevitable post-collegiate loneliness and depression had set in, I said yes. And it has. But not for the right reasons. I can only speak from my own experiences, but for the most part, my college interactions have fostered purely superficial relationships. After four years, I know how to wire a mixing board or why Jane Austen's writing was so vital to the Enlightenment, but I don't feel like I know my friends—even those I see nearly every day—any better. Pondering this for the last few weeks has posed the more haunting question, "Will these strictly surface interactions dominate the rest of my life?" Are most of my peers kiddie-pool shallow, or am I looking for a scapegoat to justify my own social shortcomings?

## Woo hoo! Party!

Remember that Bill Murray movie, *Groundhog Day*, where he has to live through the same day over and over and over? I really like that movie. Anyway, that's the way I felt basically every weekend this year. I didn't join any electrical appliances in the bath or anything like that, but I was tempted at times. Every weekend involved going to or playing a show, followed by drinking cheap beer out of a keg and relaxing with Ithaca's unique brand of hippie kids who all listen to Pavement, but that's another phenomenon unto itself. The actual location of the house would change, and the brand of beer would vary slightly, but all in all, it was mostly the same kids, the same conversations, and the same nagging feeling of unfulfillment during my drunken walks home across the Ithaca Commons.

So what was it that we talked about? I went to what was probably my last college party last night and I can't even remember what happened. We talked about The Flaming Lips or how glad we were to be done with school or the fact that we had no work to do. But I couldn't really identify with anyone. While I nodded and smiled, in the back of my head I also knew that in an hour they would be sleeping and I would be staring at my computer screen reviewing a record or transcribing an interview or responding to one of the millions of emails Ross sends me every day to keep me in check. Or I would have to write record reviews or a column for one of the other three publications I am currently juggling. It was the same during the school year; instead of going bowling or watching *Vanilla Sky*, I'd have to stay home and write. While I knew exactly what I was missing, and was fine with it, I couldn't help but think that I was building some type of invisible wall between my peers and myself. But wait... isn't the entire point of college to perfect your craft?

Actually, no. Not at all

Last fall, I was offered a job in Los Angeles, and briefly considered dropping out of school and moving to the west coast (luckily, I didn't do it because the company soon went bankrupt). At the time, one of my sage-like co-workers told me that, to him, the social aspects of college were just as if not more important than the academic aspects. I thought about this a lot upon my return to Ithaca, and while I may have graduated cum laude, as far as social skills go I barely had a C average. Hollywood films like *Can't Hardly Wait*

and *American Pie* glorify casual sex and adolescent hijinx, and for the most part my tame, surface level interactions mirrored those of these films.... just without the sex. Occasionally, there were pseudo-intellectual debates and philosophical musings, but for the most part, I felt like I didn't really connect with anyone—and not in a pretentious-high-brow-debating-Nietzsche-into-the-wee-hours-of-the-night sort of way. Just human to human.

I remember reading an old issue of *Cometbus* where, sick of small talk, that quirky Aaron Cometbus decides to make a rule that no one in his house is allowed to talk about what happened to them on that day or the day before. Additionally, no one is allowed to ask more than one question every half-hour. He thinks that this will force everyone to choose their words more carefully and discuss things that really matter. It works, and he follows this by making another rule that you are only allowed to say twenty words when playing cards, etc etc. Admittedly, this is pretty strange (and his roommates must have been from another planet to go along with it all), but while I was reading it, I couldn't help thinking how great it was. I have arguably the most perfect roommate in the universe, but still, can you imagine what it would be like to pick our words sparingly instead of spouting off the same empty rants and circular arguments about what the best Modest Mouse album is or how much we drank last night? What if instead of talking about our course load we talked about why we are here, or the meaning of life, or just sat around and tried to visualize nothingness. What if we could know each other so well that we didn't even need words to communicate, we just knew what the other person was thinking?

I'm sure other people think about these things, maybe not as neurotically as I do, but it has to be there somewhere. Of course, these issues exist in pre and post collegiate life; I just think that my environment amplifies it. Besides, the media has socialized us to be content with drinking and being superficial, so how can we realistically expect anything more? Should we? Like most of my peers, I only talk to two friends from high school, and if this cycle continues, by the end of my life I'll only have a handful of people I ever could have actually called friends. Considering that on a sunny walk through the Commons nowadays I run into at least ten people I know, it seems like something is very wrong with that, don't you think?

## Hey, Honey. What do you want to do tonight?

This may sound antithetical, but I think that romantic relationships are the most detrimental roadblock in truly connecting with other people. Whether you're the one involved in the relationship, or you're on the outside, for some reason we all feel the need to pair off with some person of the opposite (or same) sex, often ignoring every other person outside of our tunnel vision, and, more importantly, ourselves.

selves.

Intrinsically, the idea of connecting on higher plane with one other person sounds like a great idea: getting to know all of their little quirks and habits and fears and embracing them or even making them a part of yourself. Spending time with them late at night in bed or early in the morning when your breath smells like old socks, but you don't care because you don't have anyone to impress. And, of course the whole two bodies becoming one thing is a pretty effective bonding technique that I wouldn't mind getting some more of.

But while I'm far from being a relationship expert, it seems that these moments are always fleeting. After the initial attraction and excitement, things usually deteriorate into petty arguments, mixed signals, and lying in bed alone trying to figure out where you went wrong. Like the redundant routine of a nine-to-five office job, the relationship turns into something you *have* to do and often becomes more work than it's worth. I think the proof is that that 90% of the girls who I've dated won't talk to me anymore, and the other 10% I don't ever want to see again. Unless you're soul mates or something, in the long run, a romantic relationship seems like the fastest way to ruin any chance of a long-term meaningful connection.

But most of the time we don't even get that far. There are so many rules pre-supposing the actual dating that by the time you wait the allotted amount of time before getting a girl's number and making the initial phone call, the whole thing seems pointless. For example, I was at a party the other night and started chatting with a girl in one of my writing classes that I'd never seen outside of class before. She started telling me all these crazy stories about being a soldier in Germany and traveling all over the world and even in my drunken stupor, she totally blew my mind. This was not the typical party banter. So I called her the next day while she was at work, got her home number, left a message about a gig I was playing later that week, and she didn't show or give me a call back. So now the question is, with four days left in town, do I call her back or do I take her no-show status as a hint and never see her again for the rest of my life? Right now, it's looking like the latter. And while I fantasize about seeing her again in some Bob Dylan "Tangled Up in Blue" type reunion when I bend down to tie the laces of my shoe, most likely I'll never see her again.

Like I said before, the people involved in the relationship aren't the only ones who are harmed by our constant need to pair off into neat little packages. There are plenty of girls I've met who I felt I've connected with on a purely non-sexual level. Girls who I'd like to talk with or go out to eat with and discuss their lives and where they come from, or what their parents are like, or where they're going to be in ten years when I'm a distant memory and they are living out their lives. But you can't just call up a girl with a boyfriend at three in the morning and ask if she wants to go for a walk



without them thinking that you're expecting something in return. I've thought doing it, but it's always all "What would her boyfriend think?" or "How exactly can I propose this without looking like I'm presupposing 'booty-call' status on these poor girls? By the time I've rolled it through my head enough times, I realize that it's completely useless to even bother, and I go back to bed or go for that walk myself. But that's not quite the same.

#### I'm looking at the man in the mirror, oh yeah...

Instead of searching for clues in collegiate shallowness or the concept of relationships (which has existed just fine for centuries), maybe I should turn the magnifying onto myself and consider that maybe the problem isn't an external one. What have I done to try to foster more profound relationships, and if it's not much, do I really have any right to complain about the shortcomings of my peers?

As shitty as it sounds, most of the kids I associate with I don't really want to get to know on a deeper level. I actually had this discussion the other night with a good female friend of mine who, when discussing a mutual friend, said something to the tune of (unfortunately, unlike my interviews, I don't record my day-to-day conversations), "I'm just not too sure that there's too much under there," followed by profuse complements on the girl's character to cancel out her criticism. But I'm not sure if she was right, even though I'm guilty of the same judgments. I think that there's a deeper consciousness inside of all of us, some of us just need more coaxing to get it out. And maybe, like my friend, I've given up on people too easily. Maybe that's why in a town with tens of thousands of kids my own age, I can't think of a single person I want to hang out with.

I know that I'm not the model for healthy socialization. Usually, I'm pretty shy, unless I'm drunk, and then I'm obnoxious. I have a chronic problem getting motivated to leave the house, partially because I have so much work to do, but also because there are only so many nights in a row I can go to a bar and wear my voice out trying to scream over the noise. Sometimes, I just walk past the bar and wander up and down the streets; and when people run into me they ask where I'm going and I don't exactly have an answer, so I just sort of shrug and they give me a look like I said I just butchered a busload of small children. Most of the time, I end up standing on this bridge across town, just standing and watching the water rush underneath and for some reason it makes me feel a little bit better. If it starts raining, I just turn around and go home and watch infomercials on the 50-inch TV my roommate won on the *Price Is Right* when we were in LA last fall.

So what's this rambling getting at? Good question. Maybe I have some type of psychological problems I need to take care off before I can expect to get inside the heads of other people. It seems pretty unrealistic that everyone else is to blame for the fact that I don't feel like I've done the best I could with the last four

years. Plus, like I said, the workload really prevents me from getting out of the house all that often except for quick walks or snack breaks at the pizza shop on the corner. I mean I love doing *LOI*, but sometimes I feel like I identify with its glossy covers and offset paper more than I do with other people. This week has been the hardest, by far. And while I wrote off activities like "barrel races" (where teams race to see who can finish a keg of beer the fastest) as meathead wastes of time, I sort of regret the fact that I didn't participate in most of my senior week activities. Even though my roommate tried to drag me to fountain day, where all the intoxicated seniors jump into this disgusting fountain on campus, I couldn't help but feel pangs of regret while everyone reminisced about how they would "never forget it" that night. Hell, this is the last week in my life where being an alcoholic is the status quo instead of landing me in a twelve-step program. This monumental barrier between my peers and I is one that I'll never be able to reconcile, so I'll never truly know the barriers I've around myself, consciously or subconsciously.

#### Glimmers of Hope

This isn't to say that I'm coming out of these last four with only a piece of paper and a few notches in my bedpost. There were a few moments, especially this year, where I felt like I had conversations that were real and important. Not so oddly, these people usually turned out to be friends who had already graduated and had some sense of perspective on the whole college experience, and, more importantly, time to reflect on their own shortcomings. It seems like once you get out of the college "homework-party-repeat" cycle, it's easier to see outside of your convoluted box and think about things that maybe don't seem as important when you're trying to figure out where the party's at that night.

My friend Eli and I went for a walk the other night. He had moved back up here recently to be with his girlfriend who was still in school and he was at a proverbial crossroads as well. When he asked me what I was going to do next fall, I actually thought about it, didn't just blow it off like I've conditioned myself to do. And I think it's because I could tell that he really wanted to know, it wasn't just rhetoric. I think that matters a lot; you can tell if someone is actually interested in learning about you as a person or if they are stretching for small talk, and that perception makes all the difference. Not only did our conversation help me discover a lot about Eli and help me imagine a situation that would be impossible for me to experience otherwise; but it also helped me think about some vital issues in my own life head-on because I was forced into it. I said things like "maybe I don't want to work in the music industry," or "I think I need to do something more transcendent than summarizing what the new Green Day record sounds like," thoughts that were undoubtedly hovering

in my subconscious, but never fully realized until someone cared enough to help me explore them.

Then there was this girl, we'll call her Bizness. Anyway, for the short time that we were together, I felt the same way I did on my talk with Eli (I know that this is a "diary" style column, but while we're at, I'm not really much of a madman and I don't really feel comfortable putting the issues me and Biz talked about in print). Along the lines of what Dave Grohl said about Courtney Love's greed for Kurt's recordings, I don't want exploit what was once beautiful. All of the positive aspects of a romantic relationship I referred to earlier were present, at least for a few weeks. We didn't really know each other at when we started dating—we'd only had a summer class together—but the two of us were discovering as we went along and again, I was learning about myself as well as another human beings. I'm not sure exactly what went wrong and I don't really care at this point. I think part of it was my insecurity. Like Rob in *High Fidelity*, I became paranoid she would leave me for someone else. And eventually she left me for someone else. And I didn't talk to her again for a very very long time. I know the *High Fidelity* analogies are getting tired, but once, while we were still together, she told me that she was like Catherine Zeta-Jones' character in the film. She said people thought she had all of these amazing opinions and things to say, but she was completely full of shit. At a party a few weeks back, I told her I thought she was crazy when she'd initially told me that, but right then I completely agreed with her statement. What I didn't tell her was that we were both frauds. I think that part of me wanted to sabotage the relationship because I was getting too deep, and that made me nervous. Maybe it's not healthy for us to know ourselves that well. Maybe we're scared. Maybe she was just bored. Still, after all the bullshit, I'm glad it happened. I'm just a little melancholy that now some other guy gets to experience it.

And these are only two people who I've had successes with, there are other people—my sister, my bandmates, my parents, my roommate, random people at parties or on road trips—who have sparked something great inside of me, not necessarily sexual. It doesn't always need to be someone that you think you know; often strangers can have more insight into your character than your closest friend. But in many ways it's a tease...if this feeling is possible with so many people, why isn't it present with the people I see all time; the people it should be possible with? And more importantly, what can I do to change this?

#### Conclusion?

The problem is that there's no clear-cut solution to these types of issues. One thing I do know is that everyone who's read this column as a work-in-progress seems to strongly identify with my sentiments, and that reassures me. It proves not only am I not crazy, but that we are all in the same position, struggling toward the same goals. I think that ultimately my problem is an amalgamation of issues: my insecurity, the people who I choose to surround myself with, my environment. And I know there's not much I can do to reconcile it all before I roll out of town for good this weekend. But that doesn't mean I shouldn't try. Instead of trying to make everyone happy, I think we need to pick the people we think are worth really connecting with and put in some heartfelt effort and that's what I'm going to do from here on out. Forget what everyone else is doing that night. Because ultimately, that's all this column is about anyway: connecting...one person at a time.

# IN PIECES

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Connecticut's **IN PIECES** unveil a memorable display of modern, emotional hardcore. The band's full-length debut bristles with enthusiasm, excellent vocals, powerful drumming and is delivered with poise and integrity that belies the band's relative youth. **Learning To Accept Silence** is resoundingly vital and cements **IN PIECES'** place as one of hardcores' most exciting new bands.

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IN PIECES

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THE OUTER DARK

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ANODYNE

THE OUTER DARK

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*Cesarean*

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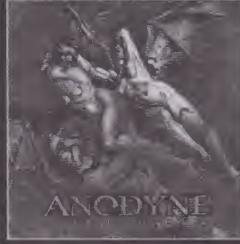
*Escape Artist Records Compilation.*

EA11.0 - CD\*



*Songs From the Edge of The Wing.*

EA13.0 - LP



**ANODYNE**

*Quiet Wars.*

EA06.2 - MCD

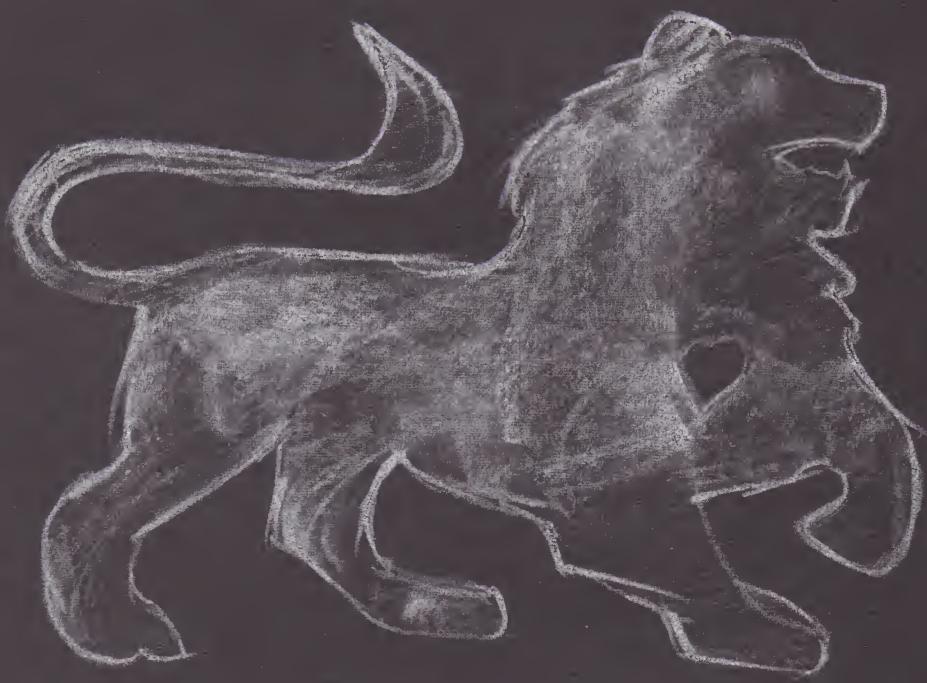
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# THE DAMN PERSONALS

THE DAMN PERSONALS — STANDING STILL IN THE USA

JUNE 25, 2002

## Reggie and the Full Effect

by Jerry Guzman



## Rival Schools

by Ross Siegel



by Ross Siegel



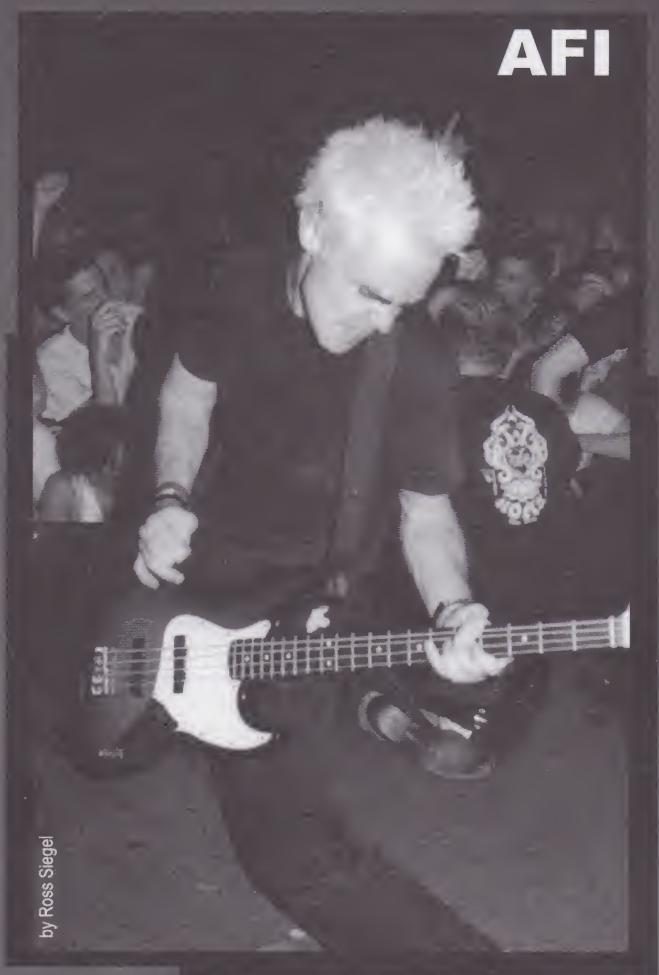
## Murder City Devils

by Ross Siegel



## Isis

## AFI



by Ross Siegel

## The Black Heart Procession



by David Pujol

## Built to Spill



by Sergio Cilli



by Jerry Guzman

## Converge

# The Buzz on the Bizz

by Ross

Possibly the most important and shocking occurrence of a respected indie establishment calling it quits is not a band, but rather a label. The rumors are true: Washington DC's **Desoto Records**, home to Jawbox, Burning Airlines, the Dismemberment Plan, Shiner, and Juno have called it quits. This label will be sorely missed and leaves a need for a mid-level indie label with stringent quality standards.... **Saves the Day** was recently featured as the musical act on the Conan O'Brien show. And, for the record, they were half as good as **At the Drive-in**'s Halloween appearance on the show.... Rumor has it that there are some **Dillinger Escape Plan/Mike Patton** collaboration recordings floating about. If anyone out there has any, we here at the **LOI** offices would kill for copies. Oh yeah, the band also has a new singer (sorry, it's not Mr. Patton) and I've been told to expect a new record shortly.... San Francisco's newest stoner-rock sensations, **High on Fire**, have just signed to **Relapse Records**. What's weird is that I would think a pot high would be the last thing one would desire at an **Agoraphobic Nosebleed** or **Today is the Day** show. But, it's their band, they can smoke their pot wherever they want.... rumor has it that **Triple Crown Records**' newest phenoms, **Brand New**, are being courted by every label under the sun both big and small.... **Law of Inertia Records** has signed an amazing pop-punk band from Chapel Hill, NC called **The Scaries**. Look for a new record called "Souvenir" in October.... Former X front-woman, Exene Cervenka, is back with a new band called the **Original Sinners** and they're set to release a new record on **Nitro** (him to every early-'80s' punk-band-back-together-again in Southern California. Let's hope they're better than **Auntie Christ**).... In **Law of Inertia Records** news, **The Life Recording Company**, owned by Aaron Dalbec of **Bane**, will be putting out the vinyl version of the amazing new record "Midwest Index" by **Billy Music**. Check it out!.... **Triple Crown** has signed an Alabama pop-punk outfit called **Northstar**. They're really good so check out a full length soon!.... **Saves the Day** are touring with **Green Day**, **Dillinger Escape Plan** are touring with **System of a Down**, and **The Damned** are touring with **Rob Zombie**.... **Revelation** has signed a band called **32 Frames** featuring Jay formerly of **Elliott**.... **Isis** has signed with Mike Patton's **Ipecac** label.... **The Glassjaw** has left **Roadrunner** and has signed with **Warner Bros.**.... In the new **Thursday** video, **Geoff** is wearing a **Grey AM** T-shirt. Word has it that **Victory** and the band are suing each other over Thursday's improper signing to **Island/Def Jam**.... **American Steel** have broken up. They will be missed.... word has it that **The Faint** have signed to **Dreamworks**.... **Triple Crown** will release a side project of Andy from **Hot Rod Circuit** called **Safety in Numbers**. They are really good in a **Quicksand** meets **Hot Rod** way, if you see that one.... **Nitro** has signed **MP3.com** darlings **Rufio** and the **Lost City Angels**.... **No Knife**'s major label days are over and their next record will be with San Diego's **Better Looking Records**.... **Victory** is really scraping the bottom of the barrel with their signings of **Voodoo Glow Skulls** and **Ten Foot Pole**.... Word has it that **Epitaph** has signed the **Dillinger Escape Plan** and the **Locust**.... **Equal Vision** has signed **Time in Malta** and **Harley of the Cro-Mags**' new band, **Harley's War**.... **Fiddler Records** has signed an Arizona metal band called **The Bled**.... **Negative Progression** has a new release by Denver punksters, **Contender**.... I've also heard that the **Blood Brothers** have left **GSL** and signed to **Artist Direct**! Ross Robinson, the man behind the boards for such notable acts as **At the Drive-in** and **Glassjaw**, will produce... **The Reunion Show** have left **Law of Inertia Records** and have become the newest member of the **Victory Records** camp.... **Hot Water Music** have begun recording the follow-up to their **Epitaph** debut "A Flight and a Crash".... Dan Yemin of **Kid Dynamite/Lifetime** fame has a new band called **Paint it Black**. He sings for this band that just signed to **Jade Tree**.... **Thrice** are now on a major label and have left **Hopeless Records**. Remember when indie rock was considered cool in the punk world?.... **Jade Tree** will release a 12-minute CD from **Fury**, a band whose members went on to form **Swiz** and the **Monorchid**.... **Idle Hands** and **Walls of Jericho** have left **Trustkill** and have, um, broken up. Thus leaving only one female on the entire label's roster.... word has it that goth-rock pop-punkers, **Tsunami Bomb**, have signed to **Nitro**, as has **Rufio**.... **Touch and Go** will re-release NYC indie-newcomers, the **Yeah Yeah Yeahs**, debut EP.... **Jets to Brazil** are working on a new record.... **Dashboard Confessional** are recording an MTV unplugged. Punk cred is out the window when bands appear on the same shows that Eric Clapton does. Period.... **Escape Artist** has signed **Lick Golden Sky** featuring ex-members of **Turmoil**....

Rosstafarian

## Law of Inertia Records Presents:



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# Online Stores

## Audio Obsessive

Web Page: [www.audio-obsessive.com](http://www.audio-obsessive.com)

**The Goods:** In this day and age of the post-internet boom it's hard to see why anyone in their right mind would want to start a dot-com, much less the not-quite tried-and-true web music store. But, Audio Obsessive apparently felt that Lumberjack's online store was hard to use, Interpunk was too... well... punk, and Insound was too hipster indie rock for their tastes. So, these people, associated with the Omaha label Caulfield Records, opened this store where one can find releases from acts as diverse as Jets to Brazil, the Strokes, and Good Riddance-- something one would have a hard time doing on the other stores. In both look and navigability AO reminds me of the ill-fated Saul Goodman, which was run by the Crank! people in the late

'90s, in that it tries to cater to all spectra of indie rockers, not just elite indie rockers or Fat Wreck punk kids. Some good features are the "recently searched for" lists where you can see what recent users have looked for. To be perfectly honest this site has no frills like Insound and really isn't as complete as it will need to be to compete with the big boys. In the future I understand there will be more contests, interviews, music news, etc, but right now what you see is what you get.

**Key Selling Point:** The prices are better than Insound or Interpunk for many releases. And, you won't be able to find Poison the Well and Radiohead together on any other indie web store.

## Music 4 Autobahns

Web Page: [www.music4autobahns.com](http://www.music4autobahns.com)

**The Goods:** Some would say that the biggest asset a company like E-bay or Amazon has is its name. Internet analysts claim that the most valuable quality a consumer based website can have is mindshare- or the ability to be the first place a person thinks of when considering where to buy a certain product (e.g. CD Now for music, Amazon for books, Yahoo for search engines). A name like "amazon.com" or "ebay" is catchy and very easy to remember, which can partly explain those sites' success in business. Law of Inertia might not be the most easy name in the world to remember, but then again I'm told the rules are different for print and the web. With that said, I'm not sure how this site expects anyone to simply roll its name off their tongue when talking about web zines they like. However, Music 4 Autobahns is perhaps the best example of an e-zine using the web to its full potential that I've run across yet. Instead of long and boring interviews which people hardly want to read in print much less on a computer screen, this site is composed mostly of video interviews that are informative, cohesive, and interesting. For those lo-tech (boring) people who don't appreciate seeing the future of web zines, and possibly zines as we know them for that matter, there are still written reviews and interviews for you to pursue. Some of the bands featured on the site are the Reunion Show, Fugazi, Coheed & Cambria, and From Autumn to Ashes. Good stuff.

**Key Selling Point:** The only punk web zine out there that truly uses the web to its fullest potential? Yes.

## Y2Khai

Web Page: [www.y2khai.com](http://www.y2khai.com)

**The Goods:** This is one of the strangest and most interesting sites I've ever seen. You really have to wonder who comes up with some of the stuff you see on the internet- like Mr. Winkle or that dancing baby from a few years ago. Y2Khai is like none other. As far as I can tell he's an Asian immigrant to the San Fernando valley of California where he rolls around in his pimp mobile smoking blunts and doing hoes. And, while he's at home he imposes himself and his lyrics onto the songs of Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, and Eminem among others. The end result is a bizarre and hilarious ride. I doubt whoever is behind Y2Khai makes any money off of it and receives little notoriety other than some porn-stars scribbling his name all over their breasts. Nonetheless, this site is very funny. Turn your volume up when you go visit the site!

## Twinz of Torment

Web Page: <http://www.twinzoftorment.net>

**The Goods:** Okay, you got me: this is a shameless plug for a site my adorable sister Lyndsay (Bugsy) and her friend Susan (Q-zen) do together to celebrate their love... er, friendship. Fortunately, they spare us the mushy details and skip right to the aspects of their lives. Susan is an aspiring San Francisco DJ who likes to spin something called Dirty South techno but will often stoop low enough to bust out an "80s set." God knows what that means, but I'm sure it's really... emo. Lyndsay, on the other hand is a member of the upper echelons of the San Francisco drum 'n bass scene and can often be found with her size 45 Jinkos and lollipops a'plenty on Haight Street in San Francisco or Breakbeat Science in New York City. When she's not Xing, she likes to promote a new party she has in SF called Slow Burning. It's cool. There are lots of pictures on the site of their lives, their music, and their favorite parts of the web. So check it out. They need all the hits they can get because they're cute and they're ravers, and that's kind of a rare breed these days.

# Misc.

## Manbeef

Web Page: [www.manbeef.com](http://www.manbeef.com)

**The Goods:** With all this talk of vegetarianism and veganism in the hardcore scene during the past 10 years, this is bound to piss a lot of people off. Or, maybe it's not. I mean, a cow has no choice when it enters the slaughterhouse to be made into a hamburger, but a person is autonomous and has the power to decide what happens to their body upon death. Manbeef.com has a solution: meat made of human flesh. Okay, I'm not advocating the consumption of human flesh, as a matter of fact I can't even look at Ethan Hawke anymore without remembering him cutting flesh of some dead rugby player's ass in *Alive*. However this site is amazing. It has a cool flash intro (play with your sound on), it has loads of tasty manbeef recipes, different type of meat cuts, and a great FAQ section in which all your questions as to the validity and legality of purchasing human meat are answered. Example- "Q: Why is human meat so expensive? A: Human meat is so expensive, because it is extremely difficult to obtain. And it is even more difficult to obtain human meat that is of exceptionally high quality. However, because human meat has a uniquely exquisite flavor, it is known world wide as a gourmet delicacy." Just in case any of you budding psychos out there want to order a few steaks to throw on the barbie before yelling, "hey, where's grampa?" Manbeef.com does a thorough background check before completing orders. When I e-mailed to ask what exactly this background check constituted, I received no reply. Go figure. Until then, I'm going to dream of some Manbeef stew for dinner.

## Virtual Crack Rock

Web Page: <http://www.virtualcrack.com/>

**The Goods:** A few years ago I got into a discussion with a member of a prominent Chicago punk band who told me he had tried crack. I had just joked about doing crack and then told the people sitting with us that crack is funny to make fun of because no one actually does crack. Apparently I was wrong. Even though this guy had gone to a prestigious Chicago high school— where I'm guessing they don't pass around a crack pipe at parties on a Saturday night— he claimed to have done crack more than once and had lived to tell the tale. This may not be the most PC thing for me to post to a list of cool websites, but it is damn funny. This site is pretty self-explanatory: it lets you e-mail virtual crack rocks to your friends. I think it's good for at least a few laughs. The best part is that you don't need your e-mail address to send virtual crack to people so feel free to get all your enemies virtually high. I think it would be even funnier if the site automatically sent its recipients virtual crack babies a few days later. Okay, I'm going to stop before I get myself into trouble.

by Ross  
Hardwired

# Web Zines

## Pastepunk

Web Page: [www.pastepunk.com](http://www.pastepunk.com)

**The Goods:** As I tell anyone willing to listen to me rant and rave about my thoughts on media, I think most web zines aren't worth the electrons on which they exist. Whether or not a certain web publication puts little time into the quality of their writing, much less the look and feel of the site, is important, and too many web zines ignore one or the other. Pastepunk is different. While I still feel that they don't use the medium to its fullest potential (e.g. video, audio, etc) they do a damn good job of making what is essentially a print style zine exist in an online setting. Jordan Baker,

Pastepunk's creator, clearly loves music-- he's enthusiastic about listening to punk and hardcore and going to shows and then writing about what he hears and sees. What is most apparent about Mr. Baker's attitude towards his zine is that he seems to enjoy the ease of updating his site for the simple reason that he can't wait to tell you about the time he hung out with Sick of it All or how he feels about the Ramones. Some may accuse print zines of being jaded and bitter, that they are only writing about the music and not playing it, but Jordan could care a less-- he's just so damn excited to be a part of it all. And it shows. So cruise on over to Pastepunk and check out a site that is hardly as acerbic as Buddyhead, and twice as sincere.

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**Ross Siegel's Top Ten Beatles' Song Titles That Make Him Hot**

- 10) A Taste of Honey
- 9) I Want You (She's So Heavy)
- 8) Your Mother Should Know
- 7) Oh! Darling
- 6) Norwegian Wood
- 5) You Won't See Me
- 4) Here, There, and Everywhere
- 3) With A Little Help From My Friends
- 2) Fixing A Hole
- 1) Why Don't We Do It In The Road?

**Jonah Bayer's Top Ten Favorite Actual DJ Names**

- 10) DJ Mystyk Mike Miccoli
- 9) DJ Wally aka Pish Posh
- 8) DJ Tesh
- 7) DJ Jazzy Jeff
- 6) DJ Jazzy Jew (no, it's not me or Ross)
- 5) DJ Strawberry Calzone
- 4) DJ Whatever
- 3) DJ Purpurple
- 2) DJ Salinger
- 1) DJ Tanner

**Tim Holden's Top Ten Wacky TV Friends**

- 10) Buddy Lembeck (Charles in Charge)
- 9) Booger (Revenge of the Nerds)
- 8) Lazlo (Real Genius)
- 7) Skippy Handleman (Family Ties)
- 6) Cockroach (The Cosby Show)
- 5) Booger (One Crazy Summer)
- 4) Harriet (Small Wonder)
- 3) Derek Lutz (Back to School) played by Robert Downey Jr.
- 2) Richard "Boner" Stabone (Growing Pains)
- 1) Stiles (Teen Wolf), Booger (Better Off Dead) - Tie

**du proserpio's Favorite Spray Paint Color Names**

- 10) Flame
- 9) Pom Pom Yellow
- 8) Lemon Fresh
- 7) Coral Shrimp
- 6) Groovy Green
- 5) Bittersweet
- 4) Azalea
- 3) Limequat
- 2) Black Is Beautiful
- 1) Whitest White

**Ryan Canavan's Top Ten Frames Of Mind For Dealing With People With Brain Injuries All Day:**

- 10) When all else fails, laugh because it really is funny, unless it happens to you.
- 9) You can have a meaningful conversation with a mute spastic quadriplegic if you just try.
- 8) People's history of how they received brain injury are fucking crazy... more than most got hit by cars.
- 7) If they freak out, coffee, cigarettes, reverse psychology, trips to the bowling alley, or combinations of all of the above are necessary deterrents.
- 6) Psychoactive medications are scary.
- 5) Think of Botch or Lack, or Suicide Note, or Helmet, or Every Time I Die, or any other good music to get me through the day.
- 4) Incontinence is not two words symbolizing worldly travel.
- 3) Wheelchair vans are not fun to drive in the snow.
- 2) Short-term memory loss means they ask the same questions over and over again all day... I must make up new and interesting answers each time.
- 1) Don't laugh.

**Tim Holden's Top Ten Musical Montage Scenes 1980 – 1989**

- 10) Learning about Stephen Falken (War Games)
- 9) Making a run for the pennant / Owners' clothes coming off (Major League)
- 8) Hard work with lasers (Real Genius)
- 7) Training: "Hearts on Fire" (Rocky IV)
- 6) Buying fancy clothes in Rome (National Lampoon's European Vacation)
- 5) First date at Golf n' Stuff (Karate Kid)
- 4) Competition: "You're the Best Around" (Karate Kid)
- 3) Becoming a corporate high roller: "Walking on Sunshine" (The Secret of my Success)
- 2) House cleaning (Revenge of the Nerds)
- 1) Cramming for the big test (Back to School)

**David Kaplan's Top 10 exotic invasive plants of the Eastern United States:**

- 10) Oriental bittersweet
- 9) Porcelainberry
- 8) Japanese honeysuckle
- 7) Mugwort
- 6) Garlic mustard
- 5) Purple loosestrife
- 4) Norway maple
- 3) Multiflora rose
- 2) Japanese knotweed
- 1) Phragmites

**Jason Murphy's Top Ten Anagrams for "Law of Inertia"**

- 10) I tail now. Fear
- 9) Fatal or I wine
- 8) Riot anal wife
- 7) Owe in fat liar
- 6) If war toenail
- 5) Now fire a tail
- 4) Irate, in a flow
- 3) I a low, fine rat
- 2) Wear if loan it
- 1) I eat now. Frail

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# Mates of State



*(This interview was done by Ross with Kori (and Jason of the Mates of State)*

**Is San Francisco better than Kansas? Why?**  
If you had to have your final meal tomorrow, which would you consume: a Kansas steak or a San Francisco burrito?

San Fran has more people, more diversity, more music, more bookstores, more beaches, more beautiful landscape, and more optimism in general. We loved living in Lawrence but after about four or five years we felt we had seen all Lawrence had to offer. Yes, SF is better personally. I'd choose an avocado and black bean

burrito from El Farlito in San Fran... [ed- agreed]

**How was it to be in the New York Times as one of the best bands that flew below the mainstream radar of 2001? Is it true what the writer said that you two can't take your eyes off each other when you play?**

It was nice to get attention like that— I mean it's the New York Times! Someone there obviously liked the record and when anyone likes something we've done it feels great. We do tend to look at each other while we play. We do that at practice and at shows. It's just how we've always played together.

**As a pop band with two instruments that are relatively hard to move, do you ever have a hard time keeping people's attention at a show? What was the worst audience you ever had like?**

Audiences are all different depending on where you are in the country, what day of the week it is, etc. The worst audiences are the empty ones but even then, if the bartender has a pleasant experience listening, and we do too, then it's a good show. Um, I can't remember an audience showing zero interest. I think that is pretty rare at indie/punk shows. People come for the music.

**What are your thoughts on the killing of Diane Whipple by the dogs of San Francis-**

cans, Marjorie Knoller and Robert Noel? Do you support the death penalty? Even if it might rid the world of two blatant psychos like Noel and Knoller?

Wow, good question. I have to admit, I'm horrified at the thought of people like Noel and Knoller taking in dogs that are known killers and keeping them trapped up in a city apartment. Very stupid. And, I feel so bad for Diane and her family. It should never have happened... I can't say I support the death penalty though.

**What does your band name mean? In other words, were you married when you named the band or just friends?**

We weren't married yet we were much more than friends. We sat in a coffee shop one night and tried to come up with a band name that fit the idea of a team, a small team and therefore a close knit band.

**Which is more fulfilling, being rockstars or being a teacher and cancer researcher-- which the two of you used to call your day jobs?**

Teaching is very rewarding but also very draining. Both "jobs" are fulfilling. We get to have unusual interactions with people. Both lifestyles promote something positive. The difference is that most of what we do now always feels natural, easier. Jason says, in answer to this question, "I'm not a rock star." I wish I would have answered like that too.

**Do you ever get compared to Rainer Maria since you're in the same band and you're married, the boy/girl dual vocals, and the fact that you're both on Polyvinyl Records?**

Yes. We do. We also get compared to Quasi and we really don't care anymore. Comparisons really bugged us at first cause we felt we were doing something completely unique (and we still do) We never owned a Rainer Maria album before playing a show with them— we just hadn't seen them before. I thought they were a fantastic band. Very energetic. But the only similarity I found was that there is a female and a male singer both singing from their gut. If there were more bands with that element I think people would dig a little deeper. The Quasi comparison is so obvious when you consider the instrumentation. We've learned to just do what feels right to us. We can't possibly write the same songs as anyone else, we're different individuals. If we end up sounding like a band people feel they have heard before, oh well. Familiarity can be a good thing.

## the reunion show



*(This interview was done by Ross with Brian Diaz, bassist and singer of The Reunion Show)*

**If The Reunion Show breaks up will you ever get back together? Would you keep the same name or alter it?**

No, I think bands that change their names are ridiculous. Obviously it was good enough at some point, so why change it? Unless some other band has the same name.

**Where did the idea for your "dance contest winner" T-shirts come from?**

From the movie *There's Something About Mary*. There is a character in the movie wearing that shirt.

**Do you think the fact that 3/4 of you come from ska bands affects how your music is written? In other words, do you incorporate any aspects of**

**ska into your music?**

I think insofar as we don't write any sort of ska related material. We have no intentions to either. I really don't think it has any relevance to our music now.

**In your opinion, what makes the Long Island scene great/bad? What is the best band from Long Island ever?**

What makes the Long Island scene great is that a lot of the bands are really good friends and a lot of us have played in bands together. We all hang out and it's a friendly atmosphere

with a limited amount of egos. What sucks about the scene though is that there is no place to really play. Venues come and go too quick. The best bands ever from Long Island were Silent Majority and Mind Over Matter. That's obvious!

**What are your thoughts on the American Taliban soldier, John Walker? Should he be tried for treason?**

Most definitely. He should be in prison for the rest of his life.

**Do you guys consider yourselves a punk band? Why?**

I don't consider ourselves anything. I don't think any band really labels themselves. People who listen to music do that to make it easier to pigeonhole the types of music they listen to, so that they can justify whether they think something is good or bad.

**What is the song "New Rock Revolution" about?**

It's a tongue in cheek take on band who think they are doing something so new and different. We know that we're not doing anything that hasn't been done. The Reunion Show as a band, down to our name, is not a new idea. Anyone who thinks they have broken new ground in rock n roll is out of their minds... unless of course your first name is Paul, your last name is McCartney and you were in a band called the Beatles (or if you were in At the Drive-in).

**Which Bill do you prefer: Billie Joe of Green Day or Billy Joel? Why?**

I prefer Billie Joe of Green Day because that's closer to what I enjoy and I probably know more Green Day songs than Billy Joel songs. I never really got into Billy Joel much to the dismay of my Long Island counterparts and my mom. The other guys in my band and their mothers may or may not take issue with this....

**Photo by Ross**

# The Gamits

(This interview was done by Virgil Dickerson with Chris of the Gamits. Ross was no help at all.)

How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea about what you play?

It depends. If it's the religious side of the family I tell them I sing "light hearted rock songs with catchy melodies". Nothing too "heavy". The rest of my family doesn't buy all that shit. They know what I'm up to.

You are the primary song writer, have you ever experienced a lengthy period of writer's block? What do you do about that?

Yeah I get the writer's block sometimes. I'm always coming up with ideas, but I tell myself that they all suck so they never even make it to the drawing board. I had some pretty serious block recently trying to write Gamits' songs but I finally got over it. I was writing lots of other stuff, some mellower stuff for a side project, but the Gamits songs weren't really flowing. There was a lot of "imaginary" pressure on me to come up with stuff that I thought people wouldn't be disappointed in. So instead of going completely nuts I wrote a song about it. I think the best way to deal with it is to just keep working and not be so damn critical of yourself. At least that's what worked for me.

What is the best show you have ever seen?

Destruction, at The Gothic about 6 months ago. I thought there would be like 2000 people there and there was about 150! Me and Tinez went and he broke his ankle. They sounded so rad and it was like seeing them in a tiny club or something.

How do the songs differ from release to release? Well, I think slowly we are molding our own sound, a little more with each release. I think the biggest differences are performance and production. I think we have come a long way from our first record in that respect. The songs were still good but we didn't play or record them very well.

What role does alcohol and drugs play in your creative process? In your life?

You are making me thirsty. I think most people who know me are aware that I do enjoy a bit of the drop. I don't really do drugs. I had plenty of that shit when I was younger. I seriously think that I would have achieved a lot more by now if I wouldn't have done any of that shit. It kills my motivation in almost every way. The drink, however, has been real good to me. It doesn't really help creatively, other than having a beer or two while I'm practicing to wet the whistle a little. I always have drinks before, during, and after shows though. We have really great friends who have so much fun together that I just never get sick of it.

Bands like The Alkaline Trio have framed songs about other subjects into songs that are apparently about girls. You have said you want to avoid songs about girls as much as possible. Why?

Actually, I don't really feel that way anymore. I just felt that way for a while because I thought we were getting compared to all these bands that play girl songs all the time and almost nothing else. Once we got a review that said on our first record ALL the songs were about girls when really only two or three were. It was like the guy couldn't even get past the fact that the first song was called "I named her Christina" and didn't even listen to it. That's one of the things that has fucked with my writing though. I like good, mid-tempo pop songs and a lot of them are about girls so when I try to write something like that they just come out that way. I think it was just my own insecurity that made me even give a shit about that.

When will your band break up?

As soon as we get some money, so never.



Photo by Dan Hollenbeck

# Haste

(This interview was done by Ross with Haste's high-pitched singer, Chris)

Are you guys the only hardcore band from Alabama? Do you even consider yourselves hardcore, or is there another genre you'd like to be lumped into?

Lets see. First off I wouldn't say that we are a hardcore band. We get put in that category but we really don't consider ourselves hardcore. There are other bands here at home that are hardcore in a more true sense of the word. Really, we are what happens when a really bad metal band can't get on any shows except hardcore shows. After years of that it kind of influenced us. Don't get me wrong, there is still plenty of bad metal in us, but thank God we still get stuck doing hardcore....that keeps us in check.

You guys have two singers-- one deep voice and one high-pitched. Could your deep voiced singer beat up your high-pitched singer? Or, would the fight be more complex?

In a physical battle I would say that the low singer may have the edge. However, in a match of wits the higher singer would completely dominate. Perhaps if the physical battle did take place I, oops, I mean the "high singer" would be rescued by all of his many admirers, because he is much more charismatic, handsome, charming, well spoken, stylish and all around delicious than the low guy.

If you had to compare the feeling of playing the best show you ever played with the best orgasm you ever had, which one was better? Which one is likely to be topped in the future?

Orgasm? Is that the sex thing? None of us really remember what that is like since the PlayStation 2 has been out.

Did you guys suddenly learn how to sing in the interim between the first and the second record? Or, could you always sing and you just thought it was wussie compared to screaming?

We have always been able to sing but it never really fit into what we were trying to do with the band until the last record. The new songs we are currently writing are the next step for us as far as the sing/scream thing goes. We don't intentionally try to write a singing or screaming song, if we feel like the song calls for it we put it in.

Do you think Haste could ever be bigger than Jesus? Why? NO WAY! I've heard that he's got the whole world in his hands....if he can hold the world he's got to be really, really big.

Realistically, could you guys ever be huge? Or are you a bit too intelligent for the mainstream aggro music audiences?

Realistically, I think that we could sell more records with a larger amount of money thrown into us, but that goes for about 99.9% of the bands out there. Would we sign to a major? Most likely, yes, depending on the "deal" of course. If we could continue to write and play the way we always have and be able to quit our day jobs forever....why not? I would like to think that we are too intelligent for some of those audiences, but I'm sure Saliva thinks that they are above some of those people too. So, could we be huge? Sure, anyone can be in the right place at the right time. Will we be huge? I wouldn't bet on it.

Photo by Ryan Russell





*(This interview was done by Ross with Mike, an amazing guitarist.)*

Are you guys the biggest band ever to be from South Dakota? Did people in South Dakota know know what punk was before you guys started up?

We can't really say for sure how big our following is compared to other bands from SD that are operating on a level that isn't associated with independent music. There are bands from SD that

are signed and tour on a regular basis. Punk and indie and hardcore bands have been coming through SD for quite some time now. Bands usually stop here in Sioux Falls or Rapid City on their way to Minneapolis, Omaha, and Denver and that's been happening for the better of the last fifteen years. And because of all the exposure to the many bands that would come through we became inspired to pursue music ourselves.

**Why did you guys change your name from Billy to Billy Music?**

We were approached by another band named Billy from the east coast who have been playing for about 7 years. And they pointed out that they owned the rights to the name "Billy" and if we released our new full length with the name "Billy" that they would take legal action against us. We wanted our CD to be released as planned and we quickly decided to add the word "music" to our name and things worked out relatively smoothly. So we're legally called "Billy Music," but if you see us on the streets it's just Billy.

**How did you end up putting out an EP on Aaron from Bane's label? Is he into emo-type stuff?**

We played with Bane in Knoxville on our first tour back in '99 and they really dug our sound and energy and we also enjoyed their live show, which is unbeatable, and from there we forged a friendship. So about a year later, after playing a show with Bane in

Madison, WI, Aaron told us that he'd love to help us out with our release. "The Band" EP was later released in Feb. of 2001 on Life Recordings. Good people those Boston folks!

**How do the residents of South Dakota feel their Senator, Tom Daschle, is doing as senate majority leader? Would you play his inauguration party if he ran for president and won?**

For the most part South Dakotans are very supportive of what Mr. Daschle has done on Capitol Hill. South Dakota is a staunchly conservative state, but he has definitely received support from both sides of the political forum here at home. Even though he has been confronted with many national and global issues since achieving his new position, he hasn't forgotten about who he is representing and who helped to get him there no matter what the press has to say about it. And in all likelihood if he is ever elected president we would surely play his inauguration party.

**Why did you stick the two best songs on your new CD at the very end (which are some of the best songs I've heard in a long time)?**

We did it more or less for punctuation. Kind of like an EXCLAMATION POINT!!!

**Which would be preferable: if you lost your eyesight or if you lost your hearing? Why?**

Definitely eyesight. Because you don't always have to see what you're playing. Audio is what we're all about.

**Ask yourself a question you always wished an interviewer would ask you but never did... an then answer it.**

Jeez this one is tough since we've only done a handful of interviews. Okay here goes, you see this one kind of a lot but it's so fun to use your imagination. If we could be on any bill with any three bands (past or present) who would they be?

Okay, Billy Music opens, then Into Another, followed by Bjork, and top the whole evening off with GWAR.

*Photo by Adam Sherrerd*

# Avenged Sevenfold



*(Interview by Jonah with M. Shadows from Avenged Sevenfold)*

**What is "The Seventh Trumpet?" Is that some type of satanic reference?**

No, not at all. It's taken from the bible in Revelations where the world is ending. "The Seventh Trumpet" is the last trumpet to be sounded before the world ends. It's more like an imagination thing, a story, than a reference to our religious beliefs. If you read the lyrics you'll know that we aren't taking any religious stance on this album. We couldn't do that because we all believe completely different things.

**Trumpets aren't very metal, are they?**

Last time I checked trumpets are made of brass, and brass is metal.

**Best singer for Iron Maiden, and why?**

Bruce Dickinson, best vocal style, love his albums and he's a fuckin' rock icon.

**Does Avenged Sevenfold tend to identify more with bands from overseas?**

I think in a metal aspect we do, but our punk and hardcore influences are more American. The bands in Europe that influence us would have to be Children of Bodom, At the Gates, In Flames, Blind Guardian... shit like that.

**Do kids in the hardcore scene ever misinterpret your music as ironic because of the guitar solos and piano ballads?**

We don't give a fuck how hardcore kids perceive our music. Lots of hardcore kids are

close minded. We play rock music for music lovers, not for kids who say we have to sound a certain way. We aren't here to make friends in the scene or sound like every other band; we are here to play what we feel and that's all we can do. We don't consider Avenged Sevenfold a hardcore band, we just try to play music we love.

**Do you feel like a lot of hardcore bands eschew the metal classification?**

Yeah, I feel they do this cause a lot of them aren't really metal bands. Also, it's a lot "cooler" to call you band a hardcore band than a metal band. Metal gives the general public a bad taste in their mouth. They either think of screaming noise or hair bands.

**Speaking of hair bands, do you think they should bring back the Headbanger's Ball?**

Of course they should. It's a place where people can be exposed to more metal and rockin' videos. That's where I first heard Guns N' Roses, so I'll never turn my back on the Headbanger's Ball. I think shows like that only help rock music, cause a lot of kids can relate to the music that don't live in big cities and aren't exposed to more aggressive music.

**Have you seen that metalhead VJ on MTV2? What's that guy's deal?**

I don't have MTV2, but if you're talking about the fat metalhead, I don't really know what his deal is. Haven't thought about it much.

**Did you think that movie Orange County was an accurate portrayal?**

Never saw it, but I highly doubt it.

**Future plans?**

Tour, record a new record, and then conquer the world, of course...

*Photo by Jerry Guzman*

# Brand New

(This interview was done with Jesse of Brand New by Ross)

The success Brand New has seen seemed to happen overnight? What do you think caused this sudden interest in your band? What did you do different than any other band from Long Island?

I'm really not sure what we attribute our success to. I hope it's that we write good songs and are fun to come and see live. I guess that's what music is about, that it strikes a chord in you somewhere and you just have this incredible urge to listen to it. Like when you love a song so much that you just listen to it over and over and over. We're not doing anything different really. I just think we're having fun and hopefully ours is the CD that kids are putting on repeat.

Is pop rock back? Why do you think the current state of the underground is a tendency towards pop instead of more aggressive sounds? How do you fit into this? Can pop be threatening? Why or why not?

I don't think pop-rock really went anywhere. I mean, this is a weird question but the bottom line is that if by "pop" you mean "popular music," well then it's always been around. And it also means that you can't really draw any lines. There are way too many grey areas because in every genre of music there are a few bands that are gonna break out and become popular, whether it's aggressive or otherwise. Then for some reason everyone wants to exclude that band from the scene it started in. That's all just pretense. Pop music is only and always threatening to those type of people who don't want to see anyone succeed at anything.

In the song "Mixtape" the lyrics speak of a girl (it is a girl, right?) who hates Morrissey and the Smiths? Why did your band feel the need to defend Morrissey and the Smiths in a song? Do people ever pull out lighters when you play that song?

Yes that song is about a girl... or girls... or a certain type of girl. As for the Morrissey/Smiths references, I'm just really adamant about their music and I get flustered when people are nonchalant about them. I'm an idiot. And yes, sometimes there are lighters.

What are your thoughts on the Lizzie Grubman fiasco that enraged New York before 9/11? Did you guys ever meet her while travelling Long Island?

Okay, surprisingly this situation hits closer to home with us than some might think. As I

turns out one of our managers, Adam Wachl, was one of the victims of this whole deal. He was like right behind her car and she basically ran him straight over. He sustained the worst injuries out of anyone. He had surgery on his leg and had some metal plates put in there and everything. I wasn't there so I don't know what happened. But when you get down to it I suppose the law is the law. It should pertain to everyone in the same way. Drunk driving makes me pretty sick though. I think if you get caught you should be thrown in jail and your car impounded. No exceptions. No arguments. I would love that.



If Brand New were a boy band, what would you each be known for (i.e. one of you is the tough one, one of you is the cute/shy one, etc)? Should Brand New be taken more seriously than the Backstreet Boys? Is this a dumb question?

If we were a boy band I can't say we'd make it very far. It would be like "there's the clueless one, and the clueless one, and this one's clueless... oh wait.. they're all clueless." I don't think we should be taken more seriously than any musical act. I mean if you can show me a type of music than I can find you fans for it. And that's what it's about making music people want to listen to. On second thought... Backstreet have made kind of a mockery of themselves lately, haven't they?

When your grandkids ask about your rock star days, will you urge them to follow in your footsteps? Why?

I'm gonna urge my kids, and their kids, to do what they want, however corny that sounds. I can't say I'm following in my dad's footsteps career wise, but I am still striving to be like him, content and responsible and loving and happy. Right now this is just the best way I know how. There is nothing rock star about what we do. I think this is more fulfilling.

Photo by Ross

# Denali

(This interview was done with Denali by Jonah)

You're from Richmond, Virginia. Which Richmond musicians do you like better: Avail or Dave Mathews?

Cam: Here in Virginia, we love all of our children. You should do your regional homework though. When speaking of Richmond and her surrounding areas, you should never forget Labradford, Strike Anywhere, Alabama Thunder Pussy, Sparklehorse, Cracker, Bats & Mice, Darkest Hour, Sixer, Patrick Phalen, Spokane, Aimee Mann, the Broken Hips, GWAR, or whatever Penn Rollins' latest project is called. I think the most recent is "Loincloth." Classic.

Why does everyone compare you to Portishead? Does anyone in the band actually listen to them?

Keeley: Female vocals seem to have a smaller classification group than any music with male vocals. Our music is moody with many various sounds, instruments, and styles mixed; and don't forget the female vocals. Hence the comparison to Portishead. This says nothing about our sound but more for our aesthetic. I enjoy, respect, and am inspired by Portishead so I give them mad props.

What are your thoughts on the recent infatuation of punk rock musicians with digital instruments?

Cam: As far as my thoughts on the digital rock age, it is an adventure in what had always scared rock musicians from the start. It's a new sound that most of "punk rock" musicians have not dabbled in and it is exciting. I don't really know of a whole bunch of these digital changes but it is the same as asking what I think of the infatuation of punk rock musicians playing with retro-dance 70's style music.

You kids have members of Lazycain and Engine Down. Do you think these ex-member tags have helped or hurt Denali?

Cam: In my experience as a music fan, I have yet to meet anyone that listens to only one kind of music and we certainly have been surprised by the many different "types" of people that attend our shows. I stopped making Lazycain music because I realized that there could only ever be

one Jawbox per planet. Perhaps Denali is now the yin to our former/other bands' yang.

Why does your drummer wear those big earmuff looking things when he plays? Do they keep his ears warm? Did he used to work on the runway of an airport?

Keeley: They are called headphones.

Could you describe your video for "Relief"?

Keeley: I have been infatuated with the chill factor in music for ages and when we wrote the song "Relief" I immediately saw the imagery for the visuals. It is based on the idea of Maura [Denali's singer/guitarist] being lost in a purgatory-style setting, except it is all taking place in her home. Throughout the song, which builds and swells with quivering sounds, she becomes closer to realizing she is actually between life and death. It all sounds gothic but it is in a true B movie style. It was fun casting all of our friends in being "spirits", it became more of a party than a serious movie-making moment but I am really happy with the way it came together.

You guys (and girl) seem to wear a lot of denim, why is this?

Cam: For me, it's simple: I grew up on a farm in a small town called Pungo. We called them "dungarees." Winter, spring, summer, or fall, that was the only choice for pants-wear—that's what you wore if you didn't want to get your legs chafed by the saddle. It kept your knees safe from splinters in the barn. It gave you something to wipe the creosote on after staining the pasture fence, and it kept your leg hair from getting caught in the clutch on the John Deere. I came to trust denim, because it saved my life.

Photo by Tim Owens





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The other day I got into my car and turned on NPR. To my delight and relative surprise I heard an overly intellectual but effective review of Princess Superstar's *IS*, the 4<sup>th</sup> album from the New York rapper and self proclaimed "downtown diva." So, I guess maybe *Law of Inertia* is a little late in the game. I mean, we do like to think of ourselves as being one step ahead of National Public Radio. But I guess when there's a good thing that people are recognizing, such as Princess Superstar, many different forms of media take notice.

In any case, I had the opportunity to see Princess Superstar aka Concetta Kirchner, perform live in San Francisco. I had heard the dope ass rhymes, the hot beats, the dirty lyrics and seen some pretty raw pictures of the Princess. But seeing her live exceeded all my expectations. The girl is SEK-SEE. And she's got more clever lyrics up her sleeve than that other blonde rapper, Mr. Eminem, has in his entire body. She seems to be all over the place all of the sudden but she is by no means an overnight success. This multi-talented singer, rapper, producer and media mogul has been putting out independent records for years. With a sound that combines virtually every contemporary musical style in existence, and a confrontational yet hilarious presence, her latest album is proves that irreverent creativity is the right of men and women alike. Here's a little bit of the conversation I had with Princess Superstar when I caught up with her just a couple of weeks after her US tour.

Have you ever heard of *Law of Inertia*? Umm, isn't like a punk rock zine or something?

Yeah it is...it's definitely a rock magazine but it's been taking some twists and turns lately, branching out and stuff...

Cool!

Why should *Law of Inertia* readers get off their butts and go buy your record?

Well maybe cause its my 4<sup>th</sup> record and I have a total DIY mentality in that I run my own record label and other than that cause its DOPE and all the usual reasons and there are some pretty incredible people. There's Kool Keith, Bahamadia, Beth Orton—a real diverse kinda thing there.

Yeah I've had the record for a couple weeks now and I'm digging it. I love Bahamadia, I feel like she is about to blow up any day now. Did you know her in Philly?

No not in Philly but I just knew her from the scene...

Cool! Well, I think its really good that we're interviewing you and stuff because I read an interview where you said you were a dork in high school. I think that's perfect cause now most of our readers will be able to relate to that point cause most of them were dorks in high school too!

Yeah that's cool!

Do you think all the freshest people out there were dorks in high school or what?

Absolutely, that's been my feeling for many years! Everybody that I meet that's cool definitely felt like an outcast in high

school I think because usually the smarter people are the not popular people.

I should let you know I am calling from San Francisco and I just had the chance to see you play a few weeks ago. And that was awesome—it was totally hot! It was kinda weird show, a weird mix of groups. Do you get that all the time cause people don't really know how to classify you so they just sorta through you in with these crazy, gimmicky acts or what?

Yeah, that happens sometimes and then sometimes I'll be put on a dope hip-hop show so it just sorta depends. Sometimes they'll put me in with weird ass shit because they think I'm weird and they don't know how to classify me. I liked playing with all those people 'cause like I can do that and then I can. For example, I'm about to go to London and play with Bubba Sparxxx. I love all sorts of show it doesn't really matter to me as long as it's cool. And that was just a freak show!

And that's cool part of what I do is like a freak show too!

I noticed that you said you often play with a live band and you didn't have this with you.

Is this something you want to bring back in future tours or you're

now?

shows. I like big shows and small shows. I like where you can actually see the people you are playing to and stuff.

Yeah, well that was definitely happening in San Francisco! I mean, those girls were like totally tossing g-strings in your face and stuff! That was a pretty personal aspect of the show I think!

I know! Yeah yeah!

Do you get that kinda crazy fanfare more in Europe?

Yeah definitely, I mean like people want me to sign their body parts. It's pretty cool!

Have you been to Japan?

No actually I have not been to Japan yet.

Cause that's where I hear you get the most totally out of control, star-struck fans....

Yeah I heard that too! I'm gonna conquer that next.

I was in NYC recently and the whole electro-rock thing has been blowing up like crazy. More than anywhere else. I love it and I'm thrilled to see it! Have you been involved in this much? What are you thoughts on the whole thing?

What are the groups that you're into?

Oh yeah I am totally down with it. I really love Miss Kittin and Peaches is cool—I heard she was a fan of mine so that's cool. I love it. Anything that is trying to be kinda new and different I am into.

I'm sure you get this all the time but I am wondering—have you continued to get all these comparisons to Eminem? It seems like all the controversy has sorta died down around him but I have read a lot of interview where it keeps getting brought up. You mention that you think it's a lazy comparison. You think it's dying out or what?

Yeah people have stopped bringing it up as much. I used to get real mad at it and stuff but now I don't really care.

Cause the thing is that he's a really good lyricist and so at least I'm not getting compared to Britney Spears....

Yeah, that would suck! But, y'know, she's got other good assets...

Ha!

Lastly, I am wondering about this song, "Bad Babysitter," off the new album.

Everyone I have played the record for has totally flipped out for that song it's totally clever and funny and hot and stuff. Now, is this based on actual experience?

I'd say that 93% of it is true. Some of its from my life and some of its inspired by literature or TV shows or whatever like some of it's true, some of it's not. A lot of it is character y'know?

Where are you going tonight?

I am doing a fucking show in New Hampshire! I have to drive to New Hampshire, drive back and fly to Europe! It's a college....

Do you like those college shows? What do you think of that?

Yeah 'cause we love the kids! The kids are alright. We are doing well on college radio. We just are like number 27 or some shit. It's the highest I ever got so...I'm happy!

So your new record just dropped a few days ago in the states. What I am wondering, and I am sure all the *LOI* readers a wondering too, what clothes are you gonna buy with all the money that you make from this?

Oh my god!! (Laughter) Well, I'm the kinda person like I can wear a piece by Gucci but most of the time I am totally looking at some thrift store shit. So like, I don't know, I don't think I'm gonna buy that many clothes. But, I do think I'm gonna buy a lot of music equipment.

What's your number one musical equipment wish list thing right now?

A full ProTools set up!

Rad! Anything else?

Well I'll be touring soon. So definitely come through and...take your clothes off!

I will! I will!

**Interview by Lauryn Siegel!**

**Photos by Ross Siegel!**

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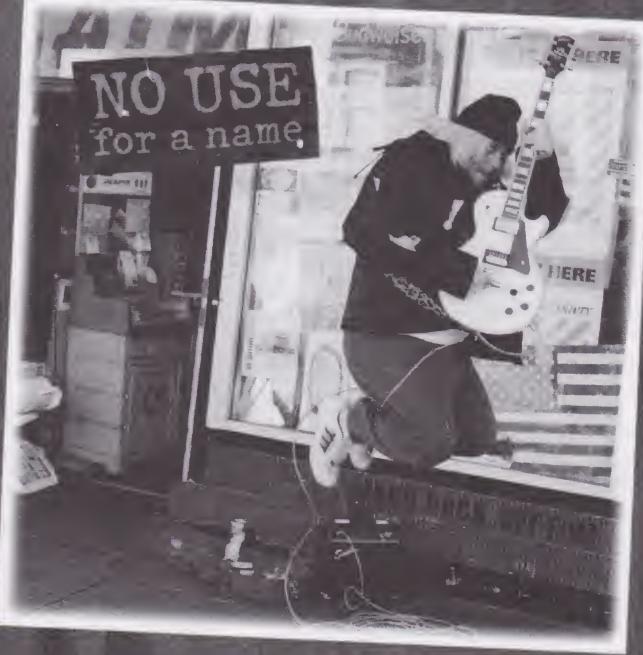
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# The Damned

by Ross and dup

Everyone knows someone who has a well-practiced face that they make when they discover someone hasn't even heard of a band that they prize. You know, the mouth-agape-what-do-you-mean-you-never-heard-of-them wave of ersatz disbelief flexed as a means of weak defense. I know it well— I'm usually one of those guys. The Damned is one band for whom I don't even flinch when someone cocks their head and queries, "Who?" This seminal UK punk band still manages to fall through the cracks, even among fans of punk. For all the documented 'firsts' that The Damned has accomplished, they never got the acclaim that they deserved in the states (like The Jam) and they didn't really sell as many records as they should have (like The Ramones). And worse yet, they diversified their style while still keeping it tight (like the Stranglers) and shuffled around loads of various members (like, umm, everyone). Nonetheless- if you wonder who the hell the are Damned, let's knock that out of the way. They're responsible for the first UK punk single, 1976's "New Rose"; the first UK punk album, 1977's "Damned Damned Damned"; the first UK punk tour of the US; and being the first UK punk band to break up (1978). After their '79 reformation they stormed the UK pop charts in the 80's, dropping genre classics like "Smash It Up" and "Disco Man", and have split and reformed to tour probably 12 times since their 1989 *Final Damnation* live album. This band refuses to go away, and yet their sound is still uniquely their own- catchy, dark, abrasive, rocking and an inspiration to hundreds of bands for the past 25 years. Original members Dave Vanian and Captain Sensible recently regrouped for the first time since 1982 and have released the first new Damned album since 1986. We had a quick sit-down with a very lucid Captain Sensible, who issued some very intelligent and mature words-- this from a man renowned for onstage nudity who wore only a pink tutu and panties during the interview.



**Ross [R]:** We're really honored to talk to you.

Ahh, there you go. I'm just an ordinary guy, don't be so star-struck.

**du [D]:** Do you recall playing the Paradise in Boston in '99? Bigger club than the one you played in Boston two days ago. It was your last gig on the tour, Halloween night.

(pause) Oh, yes that was fantastic! With the gorillas! [Showcase Showdown came dressed in gorilla suits and spent most of the time stagediving]

**D: Exactly.** That show that you actually showed your willy. I'm a little disappointed that it's gone from willy to ass on this tour.

Yeah, well....

**D: Not to give you the wrong idea but....**

**R: Why willy to ass, just out of curiosity?**

The thing is, when you jump on stage your willy shrinks. [chuckles all around] It's a well known thing.

**D: Like when you jump in a pool.**

Yeah. I wasn't getting many offers from the girls after the show, so I thought, there you go. Leave a little bit of mystery and maybe they'll chat me up. So, I decided to keep me willy in my pants and see if I had better luck with the splendor of my ass.

**R: Even after all these years you still get offers from the girls after a show?**

It's a bizarre thing but if you take an ugly bloke and put a guitar around his neck and girls find him attractive, for some reason or another. I can't work it out but I'm not gonna knock it. It's brilliant.

**R: Captain, I have to say—you smoked up there!**

Ha ha... I don't smoke- smoking's evil! (joking)

**R: Um, You were great, I mean.**

Oh, sorry! Heh heh. That's one of those American terms. "Smoked," I've gotta remember that.

**R: How, after all these years of playing, do you still manage to get up there and rock the house?**

Blimey, it's probably because we like what we do and get off on that noise. It's a glorious noise, the songs and all that stuff. I think part of it—the reason we survived and why we can still do it—is because we never made any fucking money out of it. And all the other punk groups from London—the Sex Pistols, The Clash and all these others—they signed with very big labels. They made an absolute stack of money in a very short period of time. We never had that. We were always second to a lot of others, and, except to a certain loyal few, we're not as often placed in the annals of late '70s British punk even though I think we've jogged quite a few peoples' memories in the past year or two.

**D: You guys were first in so many ways. I mean, you were playing punk rock before any of the bands that made tons of money.**

Well, we signed to a dodgy, tiny little label called Stiff Records. We didn't sign to CBS or EMI or even Nitro which we're on now. I mean, really, who's ever heard of Stiff? Apart from, you know...

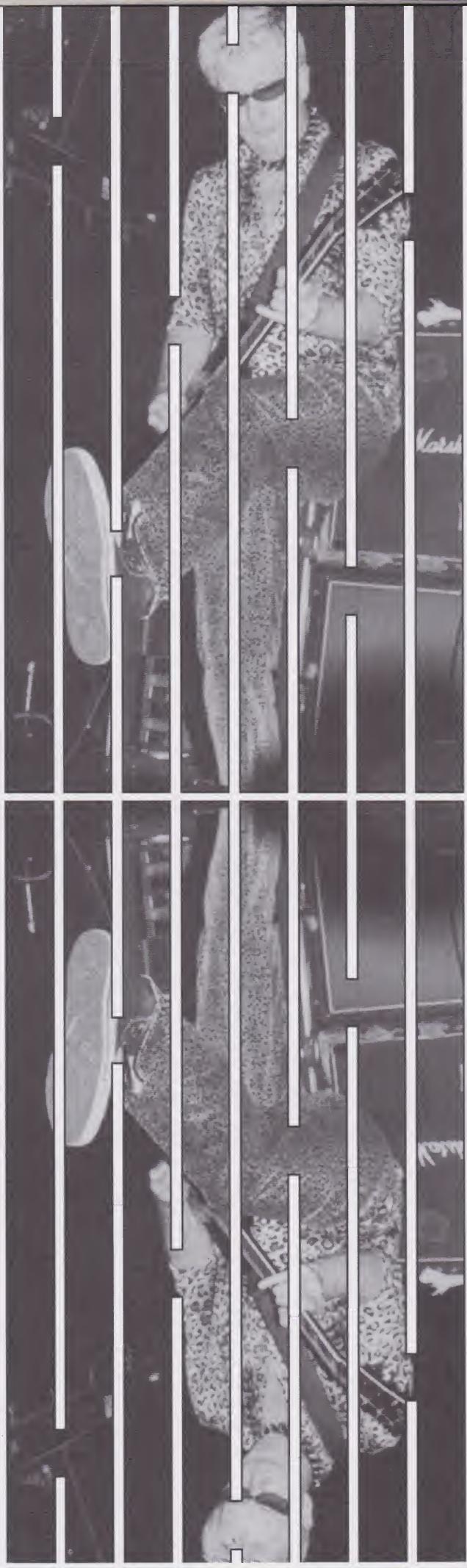
**D: Idiots like me?**

Yeah. [humbling pause] But they were a small label and they didn't pay us. We needed the fucking cash. It's as simple as that.

**D: What was it that brought you out of retirement to get back with the band?**

Well, Rat Scabies [founding drummer] disappeared and left the door open for me to come back, because I don't work with people who steal money from me. He pulled a bunch of dishonest shit with me and he is not welcome back to the Damned under





any circumstances. Suffice it to say I refuse to work with him because he stole money. And then he stole money from Dave [Vanian] as well. Dave sacked him and I came back. That's the way it happened. Dave called me up and asked if I wanted to be in the Damned again. I thought it sounded like fun and felt I still had some rock and roll left to make and that I hadn't quite gotten what I wanted out of the band the first time around... so I came back on guitar.

**R: Are you glad to be back?**

Very, very glad. Yeah, I like it.

**R: What would you be doing if you weren't playing with the Damned now?**

I'd probably be running a small label, maybe putting my own stupid records out or something. [someone from the Swingin' Utters walks through the room and the Captain tells him how great the Utters are] They're brilliant, that band is so good! I think they deserve way more success than they've gotten. In some ways, like attitude and appeal, they remind me of where we started out. Anyways, I have no idea what I'd be doing if I weren't in the Damned. I never had any plans, my life has always been a kind of chaotic rollercoaster of little bits of success, little bits of bankruptcy, financial embarrassment, uh, drunk and disorderly. Maybe I'd still be playing music—like writing film scores and the like. I'm positive I'd still be working in music somehow. Even though I knew as a kid I'd be involved in music for a career, I never thought it would take me as far as I've gotten. It's amazing really.

**R: What was the high point? Is this the high point?**

The high point... I don't know. For me, no cliché, no bullshit—I'm just really happy to have a guitar in me hand and to be playing, y'know? I'm also happy that we survived some pretty lunatic years. It's nice to actually be alive, to be quite honest. The band has a history of severe, umm, and unadulterated drug abuse—speed and coke and all that stuff. Lots of drunkenness. We called it the 24-Hour Club. If anyone went to sleep, ever, on tour, they'd get piss in the face, stuff like that. We played with Elvis Costello one night, we did a gig with him and... do you know this story?

**D: No I don't.**

Fucking wanker! 'Cos he was managed by the same bloke as us. So he fell asleep one day, he had too much Pernod (French liquor), he'd taken Pernod in the back of the tour bus. So me and Scabies, we got all the ashtrays and we put cigarette butts up his nose and emptied the ashtrays in his mouth. We tied his shoelaces together and set fire to his feet with lighter petrol. He woke up as his feet were on fire, and woke up going, "oh! What the fuck!!" and choked on all the fucking fag butts.

**D: Fantastic!**

**R: Was he your friend?**

No, I never liked him.

**R: Why not?**

Well, 'cause I think he was a little bit of a bandwagon jumper. He's a country artist, who became for like a year and a half, a punk, part of the new wave. That's what he liked: pub rock and country. This is what he's doing. He's a bandwagon jumper.

**R: I'm curious about something... I know some members of the Damned were at the first Germs show in Los Angeles...**

Please don't ask about that, it's a very very blurred memory.

**R: I'm just wondering how you view the American punk scene and the British punk scene from then to now. Do you think they've gotten better, or have they stifled?**

Well, I was on tour all through the late 70's and 80's when MTV and American television was playing Whitesnake, Twisted Sister, or whatever and all these metal bands. There was a *lot* of long haired shit bands floating around in the 80's while we were slogging our guts to no audience. Punk wasn't cool in Britain except for a few select bands that got really really lucky, and certainly weren't in their league as far as compensation went. Finally, in the mid-'90s America discovered punk through Green Day and the Offspring. Sure there was a punk scene in America the whole time—punk was invented here after all and I was really into bands like the Misfits who toured with us for about a day and a half—but it only really broke through to a mass audience during the past few years. I just say Thank fucking god! It's about time, really. It was soul-destroying. We'd be sitting at a hotel after a show, we'd slogged our guts out on stage to a very small audience. We'd turn the TV on and there's all that fucking long-haired shit all over the place. It was insane. So, to see that slop off the airwaves and finally see some people who came from the same place we come from making it really big and being successful is great to us.

**D: The band seems to be touring almost year round, globally, so that must mean that the level of acceptance is pretty good these days.**

We do a lot of touring, yeah. We've probably done more gigs than any other punk group.

**D: Are you still seeing a good response in England?**

It's so different, it's so different over there. Punk isn't nearly as big as it used to be over there. It's not the cool sound like it was when we started. You get a lot of old blokes of a certain age, clanking in chains and leather jackets on saying, (heavy cockney accent) "well, ohh you fuckin' wankers, bloody cunt, cor!, oh, err, fucking Manchester United fucking got beat last week, errr, fucking brilliant eh". That sort of thing. When we play here, there's a lot of pretty girls in the audience. Here, a lot of bands that are considered punk—whether they are or not is a different story—are really huge and are way bigger than any of the hair bands. Our crowds are also much more diverse out here. I think that's great- I know what I prefer.

**R: What are some of your political convictions?**

Well, I'm an old-fashioned Socialist and proud of it. I think when you've got 2% of people of the world owning 98% of everything I think that's shit. I think that the waste that's in the West is just like lunacy. Also all these insane religions, here and around the world... God! In a time like this as well. The bloody Muslims are saying God bless Muhammed, and we're all saying God bless the fucking Jesus and all this. It's all fucking lunacy. When will these people wake up and realize there is no God!! We've just got to get on with each other as best as we bloody well can.

**R: Are you scared to travel around the world and play music at a time when America and Britain**

are at war?

No, not really, no. I think there's probably no safer a time to get on an airplane than now. I think that what happened on September the 11<sup>th</sup> happened because people thought it was a hijacking. If anyone stands up who's had a few drinks on a plane now and says, "Hold on a minute, take me to Cuba", they'll just get beaten to a pulp, you know?

**R: Did the Damned ever try to make political rhetoric a part of what they stand for?**

I think punk is a political thing, yeah. It's an intelligent kind of movement that questions everything. If you've got to have rock stars and shit like that, they might as well say something rather than just taking the money and go, "hey man, where's my coke and where's my groupies?" I thought punk was supposed to get rid of stuff like that and question everything. I just like everything about it. And it's more than just the band. If the Damned never makes another record or never does another gig, I like what punk stands for. I like seeing people with spiky hair and anarchy on their backs demonstrating against the G8 summits. I think that's fucking dynamite, that's brilliant.

**R: Is it weird for you, coming from a time when punk was just being born, and then coming to America or Britain now and punk is everywhere, on the radio and MTV and every kid in mall has spiky hair?**

Yeah. There's a lot of bands about nowadays; new modern American punk groups, that look a lot more punk than we do. They've got more tattoos than we've got, they've got spikier hair than we've got. But it's become a kind of uniform thing. What I think about them- well it's bubblegum really, isn't it?

**R: What kind of bands do you listen to listen to?**

To be quite honest, I gave up on listening to punk music in about 1979. I had an intense 3 year period of it and I don't like to repeat things. I started to listen to different kinds of music and I quite like a lot of other stuff. I like Stereolab, I like Spiritualized, Dandy Warhols, High Llamas....

**R: You don't sound like Spiritualized.**

[Laughter] We have little psychedelic interludes every now and then, but I think they're fucking great. I like anyone who tries to do something different. I couldn't listen to The Exploited. When I turn the radio on and hear Blink 182, I think, well, they sound good but I couldn't buy an album.

**D: What about the Offspring?**

Yeah, well, they're the same sort of thing. [Ross giggles] They sound fucking great but I personally don't listen to punk music anymore. I like Rachmaninoff's piano concertos, you know, I like Stockhausen even.

**R: I would never have guessed you're into that kind of experimental music.**

Well, yes. We've had a dubious 25-year career but I would prefer, if we're allowed to make more records, it looks like we're going to be able to, that we could really experiment in the future.

**R: Where would you like to take the band as far as musical direction?**

I dunno, what I'd like to do is very psychedelic, make it lots of instrumentals and stuff. But then that's would be my input into the band. There's Pinch who is heavily into kind of punk music, Dave's into a B-movie kind-of sci-fi horror 50's rockabilly vibe, and then there's Monty who's got his own thing. So we all come together, the five of us, that's how the format of the music we make will come together. But personally, I would like to see us doing much more experimental stuff. But still to make some kick-ass tunes, to let a gross Americanism creep in there. [laughter]

**D: I feel that this new record really summarized a lot of the loose ends of the band over the years- you have the goth, experimental, psychedelic, the straight up punk rock, blues rock. It makes perfect sense when I read that you've said your favorite band is Pink Floyd.**

But that's Syd Barrett Pink Floyd, they just became a disaster, didn't they? He was going to produce our second album, but—

**D: —but Syd became a disaster himself it seems. It ended up being Nick Mason who produced the record.**

Yeeeeah [long tortured groan] I know.

**D: It's still a great record. I'm sure you don't listen to it anymore.**

Yeah. It just brings back bad memories of bitching at each other in the studio. Brian James (original guitarist) was dissolving the band right in front of us, saying, "I'm going on to greater things." And I'd never written a song at the time so I thought we could never carry this on without Brian 'cos none of us write songs. It's Brian's thing. I'll tell you what I did. I had a reel-to-reel tape machine and I recorded a load of TV advertisements- this was the golden day of TV ads, for me. They all had these sugary tunes, like (singing dryly) "For hands doing dishes will be as soft as your face, use mom's green fairy liquid." Stuff like that. So I'd take all these sugary ads, turn the tapes over backwards, and listen to the melodies. I thought, yes- there's a song there. So I'd get the guitar, crank it up loud and use the melodies I got from the ads. And that was *Machine Gun Etiquette* our third album.

**D: Great. I think you were singing the Weetabix jingle in the "UK Decay" video.**

Yeah... I think that was probably one of them. "On a Sunday it's a treat-abix, on a Monday it's pull-back-the-sheetabix..."

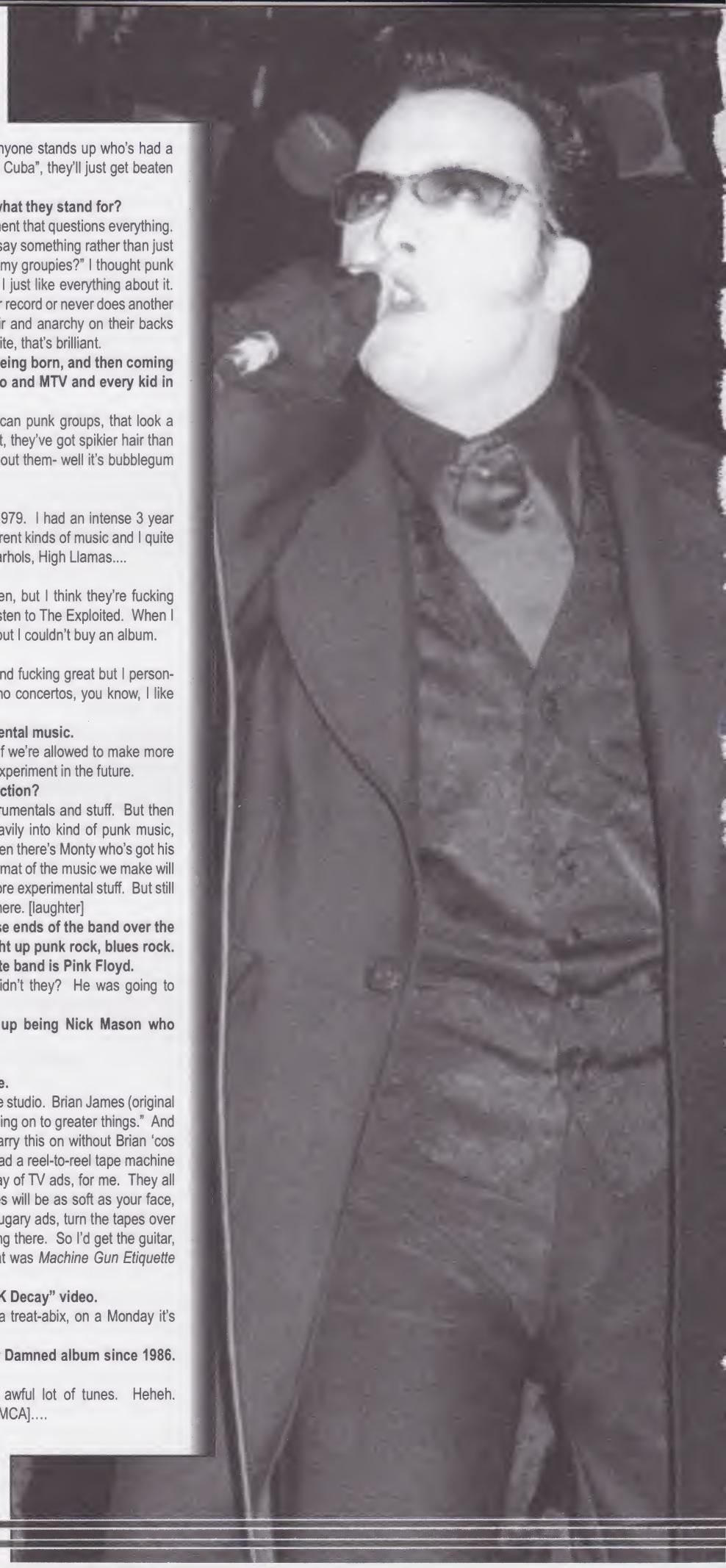
**D: Now you went solo for a while, but there hasn't been a new Damned album since 1986.**

**What do you think took so long for a proper album?**

I wasn't in the band for one, so they probably didn't have an awful lot of tunes. Heheh. *Phantasmagoria* is a good record, the other one [*Anything*, also on MCA]....

**D: I like bits of it.**

Bits of it, yeah, it's really half-baked isn't it? Some of it's good. They went in with no fucking songs, they got 3 or 4 good songs together





and the rest is filler. The Damned should not have filler tracks on their records. My favorite records haven't got filler tracks on them; I won't have a record in the house with filler tracks on it.

**R: What are your favorite records of all time?**

*Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* by Syd Barrett/Pink Floyd, *Thank Christ For The Bomb* by The Groundhogs, oh dear. Stuff like that. *Pet Sounds* by The Beach Boys.

**R: When you sit down to write a full-length record, do you come up with songs one by one or do you come up with a concept?**

The really weird thing is, I've sat down and tried to write tunes in a specific style for the Damned and I can't do that. Sometimes I'll feel a song coming on, I really feel it, and I think, "tomorrow I'll get the guitar," and you really feel it. It's a weird process because all of a sudden, like 5 or 6 ideas will come out and you can't tell what style they're gonna be. There might be a couple of raunchy ones, some sad melancholy pieces, there'll be an instrumental—you just have to take it as it comes. That's just the way it happens for me. They just all come out all at once. Then for another three months you won't write fuck all. It's so weird. And that's how my solo career happened—because I wrote a variety of stuff. It just comes out. And obviously the wimpy shit is rejected by Dave. [laughs]

**D: He's not very fond of that stuff?**

Well, I can't do the wimpy shit. Nobody wants wimpy Damned stuff. The Damned has got to be intense, and if it's gonna be slow it has to be with a dark melancholy side to it. Sometimes I write sugar-pop. It's a fair cop!

**D: You only perform "Happy Talk" live? No "Wot"?**

No, no. Oh dear.

**D: Not proud of that one? It still sounds good.**

Well, I got away with it. It was so big in town, it was number one for 7 weeks. In fact, the captain of the French football team just covered it. Weird. So I'll have a check rolling in on that.

**R: Do you get pissed off when the French football team starts covering your song? What is your team?**

No, no. My favorite team is Crystal Palace, they're from Croydon. Have you got a city in this country that everyone laughs at, sneers at?

**R: Cleveland.**

Cleveland. Croydon is the Cleveland of Britain. The football team went bankrupt about 5 years ago. I tried to put together a consortium to buy out the team, I think we raised about thirty pounds. It was nearly enough. (laughter)

**R: Do you want to do this the rest of your life? Play music and play in the Damned? What do you want to do?**

No idea. I would like to make a great record one day, I'd like to make a great great record.

**D: You've made a few.**

One that was universally acknowledged as being as good as some of the classics that I like from other bands.

**R: Do you mean, what me the critic says or what you the musician says?**

Combination. Everyone agrees that we'll never make anything as good as *Pet Sounds*. But I would like to make something that people say, "that was just a fucking great record, from start to the finish. It goes through all these moods, just some cracking tunes, it's beautifully played and all that stuff." For me, that's what I would like.

**R: Do you think you can do it?**

Yeah, oh I'm absolutely convinced we can do it, absolutely convinced. With what I know, what I've learned over the years, with the music that we soak up, with the different influences in the band. I know we can do it.

**R: So the Damned is going to be the next Radiohead, or something to that effect?**

I know we can do that stuff. It might not sound as... proggy as Radiohead. But I hear Radiohead and I think, "fucking hell it sounds like things that I was listening to in 1972 or 1973." It's very prog-rock.

**D: Well, you had mentioned Gong on stage the other day, as for what Monty listens to. And he's an amazing addition to the band (keyboards). Where did he come from?**

I know. We found him from a platform night, a performance night. He's an improvisational genius. That bodes well for the future as well.

**D: The previous touring lineup involved two guitarists and no keyboards at all, with only Dave Vanian and Rat Scabies for original members. This lineup seems to have a lot more punch and promise, and clearly you're getting a lot more out of it.**

Yeah, this could really work for what we're going to do in the future. But if Dave didn't turn up or broke his ankle on stage or something in the first song, and we had to improvise for the rest of the set, you'd hear some astonishing creations. What we do in the sound checks and stuff. It surprises me—very psychedelic stuff. Whether this audience would have liked it, I don't know, but yeah—psychedelic punk.

**R: Asking out of ignorance, has there ever been a psychedelic punk movement? Is there one I'm not aware of?**

No, not really, but psychedelic just means experimental and interesting to the earhole. Dance music is very psychedelic...

**R: Do you listen to dance music then?**

Some of it, yeah, some of it's good. Frank Zappa said that 5% of all forms of music is good, even dance music. [manager beckons] Ahh, ok, come have drink with us then....

**Photos by Ross**



# EQUAL VISION RECORDS

# NEW02



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the second stage turbine blade  
evr67 cd

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**prevent falls**  
a newer more shattered you  
evr68 cd

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now!



**the rocking horse winner**,  
horizon  
evr70 cd

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**as friends rust**  
a young trophy band ...  
evr71 cdep

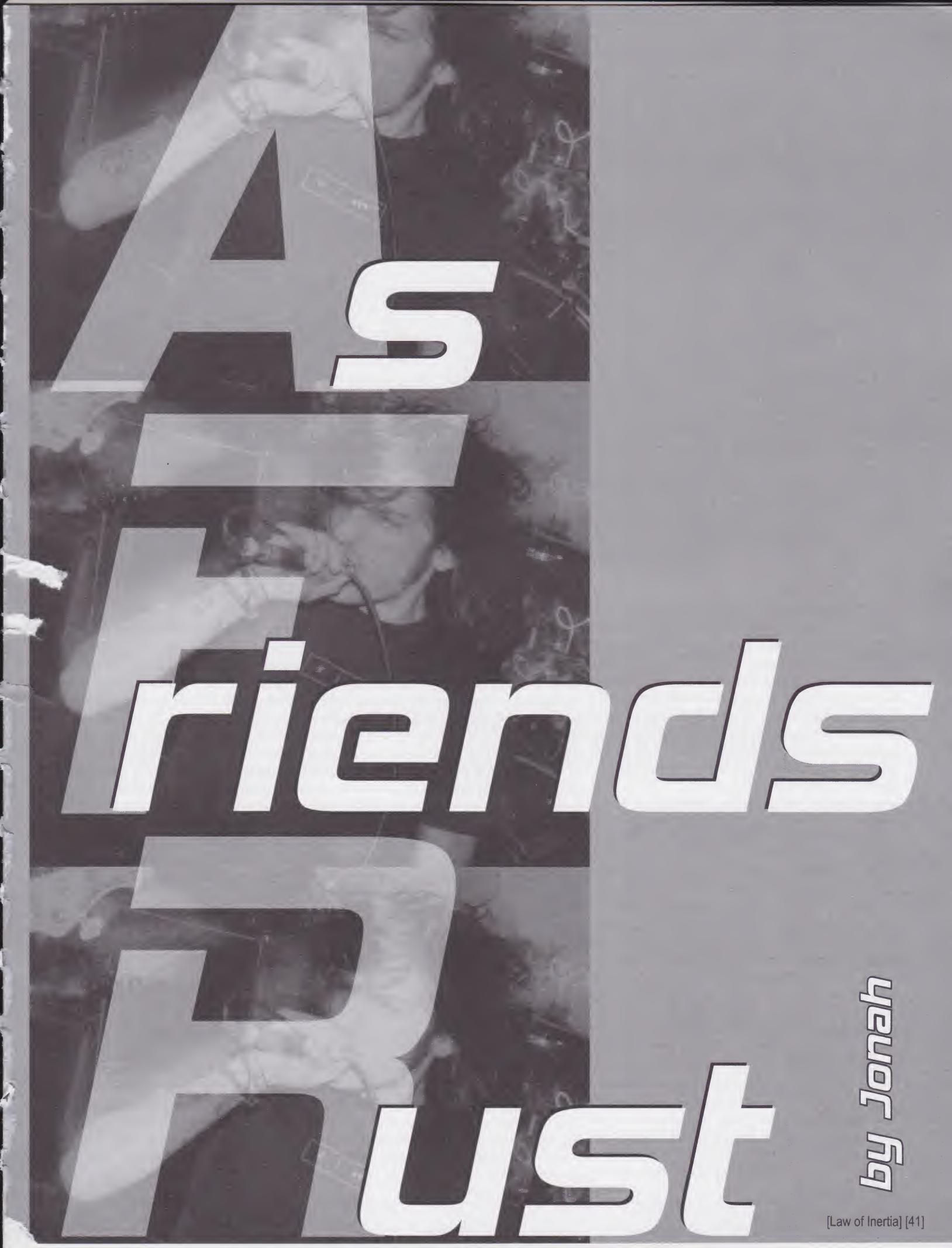
available:  
now!



**time in malta**  
a second engine  
evr73 cd

available:  
07.09.02





# *friends*

# *trust*

*by Jonah*



I feel a certain kinship with Damien Moyal. While he was spearheading the metal-hardcore movement in the mid-90's, singing for Florida stalwarts Culture and Morning Again, I was embarking on long road trips to see the latter band's pummeling Slayer-meets-Judge assault on school nights. As I grew more mature so did my listening habits, and my involvement in chugga-chugga metal riffs, XL hooded sweatshirts, and kickboxer posing gradually faded away. I eventually even (gasp!) lost my edge. Maybe it's the fact that we're around the same age – which is older than 90% of the people in the hardcore scene – but looking back, when Damien sold out his vegan-straight-edge ethics and started drinking, I wasn't as shocked as some of my peers. To be honest, I didn't see what the big fuss was about. But I still remember the hardcore groupies and record store loafers who couldn't stop talking about Moyal's hypocritical metamorphosis, one that catalyzed an endless strain of chat room threats on his life. A few years ago, Moyal re-appeared fronting As Friends Rust, a vast departure from the staggering metalcore who, along with bands like Discount and Hot Water Music, established Gainesville as the hardcore focal point it is today. Combining the aggression of his previous acts with decipherable lyrics and strong melodies, AFR wasn't metal or emo or punk, but an amalgam of the three genres

that was more palatable to my post-metal eardrums. That's why I was so disappointed that after their excellent single, "The First Song on the Mix You Make Her," a few years back, they vanished. When I recently heard that they were on the brink of releasing their first full-length in their five-year existence, I instantly hooked up this interview with Moyal to find out what happened to the band and the future of the project. With AFR, we all get a glimpse into the turmoil stewing in Moyal's head and his strong opinions on everything from social cliques to hardcore politics. Sure it's emotional, but his introspective lyrics don't rely on Dashboard Confessional's pandering poetry to make their point. However, right after this interview was conducted and AFR was poised on breaking, Moyal suddenly quit the band to spend more time on his schoolwork. The future of a Moyal-ness As Friends Rust seems impossible, but for some reason I don't think this is the last we will see of hardcore's consummate cynic, Damien Moyal. Because no matter how much shit he talks about hardcore in this interview, it's obvious that his passion for the genre supercedes his skepticism.

#### How is the group dynamic in As Friends Rust different from Culture and Morning Again?

I would definitely say there's a lot less ego, a lot less machismo. I think with Culture and Morning Again, a lot of the reasons we had trouble communicating within the band is because there was definitely a fight for kingship, if that's a word. Just a lot of conflicting, strong personalities and no one could be told what to do. This band is a lot more communicative; everyone's a lot more open-minded; we accept feedback whether it's positive or negative from each other; take things in stride more. I think it definitely comes with being a band that's less limited in the kind of music that we play and the kind of crowd that we play in front of. A lot of us have come a long way; it's been a few years, and we've kind of settled down as people and relaxed a little bit on all the intense politics that we were obsessed with from the minute we woke up to the time we went to sleep.

Are those politics still a part of your life or was slacking on them a part of growing up?



I don't think it's an absolute for everyone growing up – for me it was. I was really extreme and I was really letting it kind of effect me negatively. I still have the same basic politics. I still think the same things are fucked up and the same things need to stop happening or need to start happening, but I'm definitely less concerned about proving to the entire world that every specific thing that I do in my personal life is a reflection of my politics. I don't think that's really necessary anymore. I think you can believe in what you want to believe in and still allow yourself to kind of falter and be human and fuck up and just kind of, live. I appreciate indulgences now, and before my life was completely based on a code of restrictions: "This is what I don't do, this is what I don't eat, this is where I don't go, this is where I don't shop." Now I'm just kind of living more.

**Did you get a lot of flack for "selling out" in Florida?**

Yeah, in Florida and pretty much everywhere. Here's one of the main problems in hardcore: If you're in a band, you're completely under a microscope and everything that you do is going to be really examined and really criticized. I think it was kind of an unfortunate situation that I happened to be the singer for a straight-edge band, rather than just a straight edge kid. There are tons of straight-edge kids out there, but they don't get the kind of flack that someone who fronted a band who sung about those things would get when they change their politics. It just proved to me that a lot of people really were not actual friends; the only thing that kind of bonded us was the fact that neither of us wanted to pour a certain liquid into our cups and that's what our entire relationship was based on. At least that's how it appeared to me when a lot of those people kind of disappeared from my life as soon as the liquid in the cup changed.

**So what would you say the biggest problem in the hardcore scene is right now?**

I would have to say the belief that we still are a scene in itself is a big problem because there's really nothing that makes us much different from so many subcultures out there. The music that we listen to is just a hair away from the music that's being mainstreamed and commercialized, which is fine, but just to go on thinking that we're a part of this elite, underground community is just kind of absurd. Our community is not really driven by any set of substantial politics

or views. It's not really much of an escape any more, because you go to it trying to get away from the things you can't take in the outside world and you find the exact same things within our community. I don't know if it ever was, but it's not now; it's just kind of another style of music– smaller clubs, different style of music, kids in baggier pants– that's really the only thing that makes it different from any other community.

**But don't you think there are legitimate activists in the hardcore scene that are trying to accomplish something positive?**

Yeah, I guess there are, but I see them more in other sorts of similar subculture groups. In the punk rock scene and hardcore so many [people] are even afraid to admit that hardcore has anything to do with punk rock. We create these divisions, you know? I think that the people that are actually active and do have a good grasp and outlook on things are not necessarily up front, pointing their fingers in the air, screaming along. A lot of times I get the impression that this is just leisure, people come to shows for roll call, to say they were there, and half the time they're not even paying attention to the bands, what they're playing, what they're saying. But they'll buy the T-shirt before they leave if it's the tee-shirt to have that summer. I'm really disenchanted with the whole thing right now and it really sucks because there's still definitely a soft spot in my heart, just because I grew up on it and there's still so many bands I love.



There's still nothing that really compares to the energy of that kind of communication between a band and the crowd and all of that, but every time I go to a show I really feel disappointed and I end up leaving.

**So what keeps you around?**

Uh, I'm not really sure. I guess at this point, I sort of have dropped out of things in the sense that I never really go to shows anymore unless we're playing. I don't keep up with new bands or new releases, I just sit at home and spend time with my girlfriend and my cat and I'm at school full-time. The only thing that really keeps me linked is the fact that I like to play music and I like to write music with friends and record and tour, and it just so happens that the only kind of music that I'm good at contributing to is in this genre. I don't know, I guess as many changes as we make as a band, we will always have the hardcore kids at our shows, which is good— it's comforting and it's kind of cool—but there's definitely no concern about keeping our music likable to that crowd. I mean if we wanted to, we would on any given day just start playing reggae or polka music and I think hardcore kids would still come just because...I don't really know what I'm saying (laughter). I'm just kind of sick of the whole thing. I hate to say that because I still have something against people who are like, "I don't fucking care about that shit anymore, I used to listen to hardcore." I still do; I just got home from school and was blasting Burn the whole way back. But there's something much different about only associating with those types of people and going to shows and some Denny's afterwards and seeing people from the show, and talking about nothing but bands, and every joke is like, "Oh yeah, how many Ray Cappo's does it take to turn in a lightbulb?" People who just non-stop eat, drink, and shit hardcore and everything are just tinted with this kind of Champion hooded sweatshirt tint.

**I know exactly what you mean. So how old are you now?**

25.

**Well I'm 22, and I go to hardcore shows and I feel old. I think the fact that most of the kids at hardcore shows are still in high school and live with their parents in a has something to do with that mentality.**

Yeah, I think that's it. If you look at some of the music that people of our parents' generation listened to, a lot of those bands or styles of music were kind of smaller when they were our age, but they still liked

them. You don't find that very often with hardcore people, the turnover rate is ridiculous. It's like people come in when they're 15 and they're gone by 18, and that's it. I think the reason is that we've made it a really hostile environment for people to stay in because those are the years that people change the most, and when you come into hardcore, you kind of get sucked into categorical thinking. I think that develops a lot of pressure. People adopt all of these sets of ethics and ideals and lifestyles at a point where they can't really say with much of valid basis whether they're actually going to be able to adhere to that for the rest of their life, you know? And when they realize that maybe they don't want to, they're very cornered. And that's why a lot of people feel like if they're going to change-- even slightly-- during those years, they have to completely get out of the visual scope of every other hardcore kid before they're found out. It's kind of sad. Jazz doesn't place those types of fears inside people, and that's why now, forty years later, our parents can still listen to the same kinds of stuff: there's no guilt attached to it, no self-consciousness attached, no stigma; and in hardcore, there's all of those things.

**Also in jazz, you don't see people getting tattoos binding them to the genre, like "Jazz: In My Blood..."**

Or "Jazz for life," you know? That's the thing, it's just a bunch of young kids making some very grown up claims, and when you finally get to a point years down the line where you realize you didn't know shit, you're really trapped because you're gonna be scrutinized by everyone in your scene. In your community, you really have no room to grow or change, and this should be the community that welcomes change the most. Everything that hardcore and punk rock have always been about is change, but whenever anyone changes on a personal level, it's the end of the world.

**Last issue we interviewed Jason Rockhill from Unitas (which features two members of Hot Water Music), and asked him about paragraph in the liner notes responding to your song, "Half Friend Town." I wanted**



**to get your side of the story: is there a feud between the two camps?**

No, there's not, it's the Gainesville way. People here – and we're definitely guilty of the same thing – are very focused on local politics. Hot Water did some back-ups on that first release, and then afterwards, our bassist Kaleb was really, really upset with them because he roadied for them for three years; and when he got in the band and we started being active they were very excited for him. They were like, "Man, we're gonna do so much shit together, you're like the fifth member of our band." And to this day, As Friends Rust and Hot Water Music have played one show together ever, and that was in Belgium, years ago; and we live down the street from each other. At the time, Kaleb was really upset about that and it kind of rubbed off on all of us. We were all upset about the situation and the elite attitude that we were getting from a lot of bands in Gainesville. It was a tight circle and they were really unwilling to branch out. So that's why that was written on our second EP, "There is Division. Thanks to all the Gainesville bands who were willing to play shows with us." As far as Unitas having a song in reaction to "Half Friend Town," that was kind of a surprise to me because we're all down with everyone in that band. Jason Rockhill used to set up shows for us in Vero Beach, Florida, with Culture. When I heard about that from our new guitarist, I was like, "Are you sure, man?" and he was like "Yeah, they use your full name: 'in response to Half Friend Town written by Damien Moyal.'" I think they made the decision not to play that song because he thought it was the same petty, bitchy behavior that we exhibited on our EP, which it was; but it was definitely heartfelt and it was how we felt at the time.

**In his defense, Jason also said that the "underground Media needs to instigate more fighting between bands," so that might also explain his comments to an extent.**

Yeah, it might have. If you have a problem, sing about it – I always have. But I just didn't really see how any of that stuff

involved him or them as a band. They formed way after that EP was released, and then to take up arms in this war that was already over, two years after the fact, that was kind of strange.

**Regarding your latest record, *Won*, you wrote, "The mood is dirty, dark, and seedy. Not 'for the kids,' at least for the gutless momma's boys and daddy's girls of hardcore today. Sorry." How has the reaction been to the new record?**

So far it's been overwhelmingly positive.

**Does that surprise you?**

A little bit. It surprises me in the sense that I think a lot of the people that we didn't expect to hang with us after this release are still there, which is awesome. I really thought it was something that would put off a lot more people than it did. But a lot of the positive response has been from people who are just now with this release becoming familiar with us, and I think it's easier for people to like the album if they didn't have anything else to compare it to. I was expecting a lot of "It doesn't sound like the EP so I don't like it," and there definitely has been some of that. But the EPs didn't sound anything like each other. There are definitely some people that don't get it; they're like "I don't understand, you're not singing about anything important, the music's not like it used to be." I don't know, it's just different. I'm sorry, I'm really wired. I've had like eight cups of coffee this morning and I just walked in from school.

**What are you studying?**

I haven't really picked a major. I'm just going to community college here and trying to get some credits. It's been like five years since I've gone to school full-time, so I'm trying to catch up a little.

**It's probably been hard for since you've done so much touring.**

Yeah, it's been impossible. But we don't really have that much to do this spring. We have to record in a couple weeks and then we may or may not go to Japan for one week. I don't think two weeks would be worth it to sit out another semester. Nobody else in the band is going to school, I thought a few of us would; I think they're kind of upset.

**Anything else to add?**

Just that we'll have another release coming out in April or May, a 5 song EP. That's it.

**Photos by Pat Lavery**

# THE AFFECT

by Virgil Dickerson



*The longer I find myself involved with the music industry, the more jaded I have become. New music I would have loved 5 years ago does nothing for me. The odds of hearing something that blows me away are on par with winning the lottery, but there is music out there. In fact, when I received a package from Fueled By Ramen, I discovered an incredible new artist, the Aeffect. Their first release, *A Short Dream*, is nothing short of spectacular. Their sound is a refreshing change of pace compared to the millions of cookie-cutter bands getting signed everyday. Since I received this release, I have not stopped listening to it, and I can't wait for them to record an album. When I found out one of the members also worked at Fueled By Ramen, I thought the guys in the Aeffect might have an interesting perspective. I put together some questions and the Aeffect were kind enough to answer them. Below is the resulting interview. Whether or not this is the first you have heard of the Aeffect, trust me when I say this will not be the last you hear from these guys.*

**Your music seems to be influenced by bands that peaked in popularity during the 80's, how did your band develop your current sound?**

**Aaron:** Our sound definitely draws from the influences you speak of, but in reality, the sound of our EP came mainly from the instruments that were available to us at the time. If you're speaking about our "current" sound then you'll have to consider the new guitar and rock influences. All of us grew up listening to stuff like Depeche Mode, the Pet Shop Boys, and New Order so it was a natural thing for us. Our scopes are not simply limited to the realm of synth pop, however. The majority of our CD collections have consisted of mostly indie rock bands for years. My favorites right now include Mercury Rev, the Flaming Lips and Grandaddy. Not to mention that Steve and I have been messing around with synth-based music for about 7 or 8 years now.

**When you write new songs are you conscious of how your music will be perceived or classified? When can we expect a debut full length?**

**Brad:** I think at some level you always wonder what other people will think when you're writing; we're really just trying to focus on writing the best we can and not focusing on what some may think.

**You are planning on doing some touring this summer. When playing shows, do you find yourself trying to play with bands within certain genres?**

**Brad:** Right now we're trying to do as much as we can, but ideally, people that appreciate indie rock, synth, and poppy stuff seem to be the most receptive to our music.

**Aaron:** I'd actually much rather play with a band because I thought they were nice guys or fun to hang out with over choosing them for their genre. There are certain bands that we listen to that we'd love the opportunity to play with, but as for genre, not really.

**If you could choose the band that you would tour with, who would you choose and why?**

**Aaron:** I'd say for me it would have to be Cursive. I've liked those guys for quite some time. I remember seeing them at the Hardback with about 5 other people and it's so amazing to see how far they've come.

**Brad:** Ideally, I'd love to tour with U2. But wouldn't everyone?

**Aaron:** Definitely on *The Joshua Tree* or *Achtung Baby*, but not now.

**With the Faint's rise in popularity and major labels trying to sign them, do you see this as something that will help or hurt your band?**

**Aaron:** It will help us for sure. It's hard to survive in a genre that barely exists. So I'd love to see Rockwave expand in that sense. If you are talking about major label attention, we're

already starting to get it and that could help or hurt us depending on what type of deal we got, certainly. As long as we look at things with a clear conscience and think them through, there should be nothing to worry about.

**Brad:** I think that the music industry is beginning to look for new music, we're already beginning to see new styles stirring into the mainstream mix. After stagnating for too long, I think it's refreshing to see that people want to hear something new. As for the Faint, I completely respect what they do and it's great to see that they're "major" worthy, or vice versa. But, I don't think they would hurt us at all, we have something to offer that's completely different from them, yet within the same musical spectrum.

**Aaron,** you work at the label that puts out your releases. Does this cause any conflicts of interest or make it more difficult for your band?

**Aaron:** It doesn't really come into play too often there. I let the other guys in the band handle the label dealings so there are no conflicts of interest, and from talking to The Faint and The Microphones, I know that those guys help out at Saddle Creek and K, respectively.

**Does working at Fueled By Ramen make it difficult to tour for long periods of time?**

**Aaron:** It hasn't really been an issue up to this point. As long as the tours aren't too long, roughly 2 weeks or less, things are fine. Plus, I can work on the road from the laptop or be reached via cell phone. We've got the technology....

**Your band sounds nothing like any of the other bands on Fueled By Ramen; is this a good thing or a bad thing?**

**Brad:** I think that it's good for the label to broaden their horizons and delve into new areas. One issue in doing this is that initially you're not gonna have as much reach into those new areas, so it's tough to get your bands out there at first, but they're doing okay. In a bizarro world, which band would be your opposite?

**Brad:** Talking Heads and Technotronic

**Aaron:** Opposite like another reincarnation of us, only evil? Flock of Seagulls I suppose. I'm kind of confused by what you mean. Maybe Devo if you mean a good band that's similar but different.

**What inspires The Aeffect the most?**

**Brad:** Just creating music we love and seeing good things come from it.

**Aaron:** Having an impact on people's lives. Making friends and meeting people. Self-expression. Roughin' it on the road. Pushing for change from the grassroots level. Seeing new places. The comaraderie and cohesiveness of us as a band.

**Is there a goal that you want to achieve with your band/your music?**

**Aaron:** The goal of our band is to write music we enjoy, see the parts of the country (and world) we've never been to, and hopefully one day down the road try and have an impact on important issues the way Dee Snider was able to during the censorship hearings, or the way Bono does his part in many international political arenas.

# THE MINOR TIMES

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# Strife

by Ross





### Strife aren't

necessarily a complex band, but they have found themselves in a precarious position. Having spearheaded the mid-'90s straight-edge hardcore movement in California—where straight-edge wasn't as commonplace as it was in, say, New York—they were one of the biggest bands playing heavy music in the nation at that time. When other outfits like NOFX, Green Day, or Pennywise were all the rage in the punk world, Strife were blazing their own path along with contemporaries like Snapcase and Earth Crisis. When listening to early Strife records it is easy to see why plenty of people probably did not take to their music. It was brutal, unrelenting hardcore, with a very opinionated outlook on substance usage.

Nonetheless, the band achieved wide acclaim in the hardcore world and helped make Victory Records the biggest hardcore label in the world. But times change and people do as well, and the Strife members decided to part ways and stop playing under that name. The result was that four of the five members of Strife abandoned the straight-edge lifestyle their band supposedly championed above all other political enterprises. Fast forward five or six years and the state of underground music has changed. Hard music has achieved more commercial appeal in the mainstream so more kids in the underground are aware of its presence in their scene. However, not only is straight-edge not nearly the galvanizing force it had been a few years prior (one could argue that straight-edge is simply out of fashion), but heavy music has taken a turn towards more emotional and sometimes more melodic sounds. A reunited Strife find themselves in a strange position. Their core group of fans had been straight-edge, and their sound most readily appealed to young men eager to hop all over each other while singing about being drug free. However, not only are most of the members of Strife no longer straight-edge—thus alienating their past fanbase—but their old sound may be a bit dated as well. I was curious to see what the members of this interesting band had to say about their new record, extended touring plans (that I've heard have been somewhat downsized due to lack of interest), and the current state of hardcore. I spoke with Rick Rodney, the band's very amiable singer, about "losing the edge," his brief acting career, and what he hopes will happen to his band in the future.

**So, Rick, you grew up in LA, right?**

Yes I did.

**Are you a surfer?**

No, but I did skate a lot when I was younger.

**Why do you think so many of the classic Southern California hardcore bands—where some people could argue that hardcore was invented—were surfers and now everyone is a skater? Like TSOL and the Circle Jerks... all surfers.**

Good question. For me, I've just never lived by the beach, I've always lived inland in Hollywood so skating was always more convenient. But, I think skating is just as, if not more, tied to punk than surfing. Like Duane from The US Bonbs and Todd from FYP were really great skaters before they were rockers.

**Do you think there is a beach culture versus skater/inland culture clash going on in SoCal?**

Not really, although you'd think there would be. Traditionally, a lot of the Orange County bands have been surfers, and back in the day Orange County bands were always the toughest people at the shows. They all had gangs and would beat up anyone who wasn't in their gang. So, that may have fueled it in the early days of Suicidal Tendencies or something.

**Anyways, why did you guys break up the first time around?**

Well, we felt like we had hit a wall and we were tired of dealing with the bullshit of hitting a limit of what we could do. We weren't moving to the next level of success—we weren't moving

up to a place where we wanted to be in order to make the band our livelihood. We would go to Europe to support Sepultura but we weren't going on our own headlining tours abroad and that was what we needed to make the jump. We just kept waiting for the jump to happen where Sick of it All would be supporting us instead of the other way around [laughter]. I also think we were tired of being a straight-edge band. We got a lot of shit for playing with metal bands who weren't straight-edge since we were apparently a hardcore band and apparently the hardcore scene is very limiting. I wasn't aware of this—all the time I was growing up I thought that hardcore was cool with taking risks and branching out. I guess I learned that that's not necessarily true.

**What were you doing as a day job after the break up?**

I worked in retail. I worked for Diesel.

**How was that?**

It was a day job, it sucked [laughter]. So, our roadie passed away and we decided to play benefit shows for his family. We decided to play them under the name Strife and it was fun and we had a good time. We had been keeping in touch. Andrew and Sid had been playing in Anger Means for about a year or so. They had me sing on the demo and we played a bunch of smaller shows under that name. Then I officially joined the band and the rest of the guys jumped on board just for fun. We had a more laid back attitude than before so we quit our day jobs and decided to do this again full time.

**Do you still play the straight-edge songs even though only Andrew is still straight-edge?**

No we do not. We scrapped those songs because obviously it would be hypocritical to still sing about that when we don't all follow that creed.

**Why did you do that? It may be a dumb question but why did you scrap a bunch of songs just because you may have a beer now and then, even though you still may find validity in straightedge and you still agree with its merit?**

Well, it really wasn't that many songs. It was only about 5 or 6 that we scrapped because of the straight-edge references. We also don't play "One Truth" anymore and that was one of my favorite songs. But it's just not us. We don't want to piss off anyone who is straight-edge and holds it dear to them. People may laugh to hear that I still respect the movement very much and that I wouldn't have wanted a band I respected to mock it by using it to fill space in the set when I was straightedge, so I'm not going to do it now. There was an awful lot of shit talked about me when I broke my edge, but not for a second did I ever regret being straight and being like that for so many years. So, I'm not about to spit in its face by discrediting it. You know? We always laughed when we'd see bands singing "Straight-edge" by Minor Threat with a beer in their hands, so we don't want to make a mockery of it like that.

**What did the other members think when you broke your edge? Did they want to break up the band because of it?**

Well, I lost my edge after the band broke up.

**If the band hadn't broken up do you honestly think you would have lost your edge?**

I'm not sure, maybe. Straight-edge is very family oriented—it's like being in the Marines in that kind of gung-ho mentality. You need the kind of verbal reinforcement that comes by being around other straight-edge people and singing about it at a show to remain true to what is a very difficult movement to remain part of. So, after the band broke up and I wasn't going to as many shows or singing about it every night, I didn't feel like I was really part of that family anymore. Plus,

because our politics have changed, or—as I like to think

of it—become more all-inclusive. Also, I think there

will be people who find a new interest in our band since we're not as militant but since we have a good, hard sound. Maybe now more people can focus on the fact that we're actually pretty talented musicians and not just a group of people with a message who happen to play music. I mean, we don't just listen to hardcore anymore. If you name a style of music there is someone in our band who listens to that style. So, I think we've grown as people and as music lovers since the last version of Strife. And, don't get me wrong, we are still political. There are some pretty overt politics on the new record. But the politics have gotten a bit more sophisticated, I think. The lyrics are a bit more in-your-face now if you can believe that. I write lyrics one way and in one mood and the more I sing them the more meanings and they take on. Usually I don't even really know what the song is about until we've played it for a while.

**Does this topic bother you? Are you sick of talking about the new Strife versus the old Strife?**

No, not at all. I recognize that people are going to be interested in the straight-edge thing as well as how we've changed as people. I would be interested too.

**Cool. Good attitude. Here's a question for you: around the days of 1994, the California Takeover days, you guys, Earth Crisis, and Snapcase were the biggest things in hardcore. Now, Snapcase isn't as important as they used to be, Earth Crisis was considered kind of silly before they broke up, and you guys were off the face of the map for a while since you weren't together. How do you think people will take you today?**

Good question. I don't know. We're gonna go on the road and see how it goes. I expect there to be a lot of controversy but I also expect to see a lot of faces we haven't seen for a while.

**How about the music? Is your style as in vogue as it used to be?**

I think so. Metal is still in, maybe more than ever in hardcore. I think metal is larger and I think more people are used to very very hard music than they were in 1994. There are metal bands on the radio and on MTV. I think we're actually leaning far more to the metal side of the spectrum than the hardcore side, which is rough because there's not as much of the hardcore clichés like stage diving and circle pits—which I like. This is going to come out wrong, but I think I'm more selfish about my music these days. Way back when I was singing for the choir. Now I think I'm singing more for myself. Sometimes I don't know if a lot of people who are into our music can relate. A lot of Strife fans are a lot younger than me and I know more about the world and about myself than I did when I was 16 or 21, you know? I think it's not as important to me to have the crowd sing with me—which honestly may be a reaction to the straightedge thing.

**But those tend to be what the best bands do. There's a time and a place to play music for someone without being on top of them.**

Right! Now I am definitely making music for people that want to hear it, but at the same time it's for me. Radiohead is a perfect example of that. They clearly want people to like their music, but they are doing what they want to do. And that is a point I think that every artist would like to get to, both in terms of the music business and sheer creativity.

I've never really agreed with straight-edge kids. I would get letters from kids interpreting my lyrics or the band in a way that I didn't want to be associated with. There are some bands, not naming names but you know which ones, that are very very serious—to a militant point—about straight-edge in their worlds. I'm not. Straight-edge to me is completely personal and should not be a popularity contest or involve peer pressure. So, when kids would write me and tell me to be more militant or interpret my lyrics in a militant way it made me sick. I do not believe in straightedge if it's done to be cool or to fit in. In that case I think you might as well go drink a beer because peer pressure is peer pressure, and that sucks. One of the major problems with the straight-edge scene, like any other social gathering, is that those that speak the loudest often dictate the tone for the rest. Earth Crisis, for example, are very good friends of ours and when "Firestorm" came out people took it very seriously. When they came out and they were singing "street by street, block by block" everyone was totally energized. It was different than the big straight-edge bands of a few years prior. Right. The kids listening to Earth Crisis were prepping for some kind of substance-free revolution.

**The only problem is that the kids who were sharpening their knives, if you will, were living with their parents and in high school.**

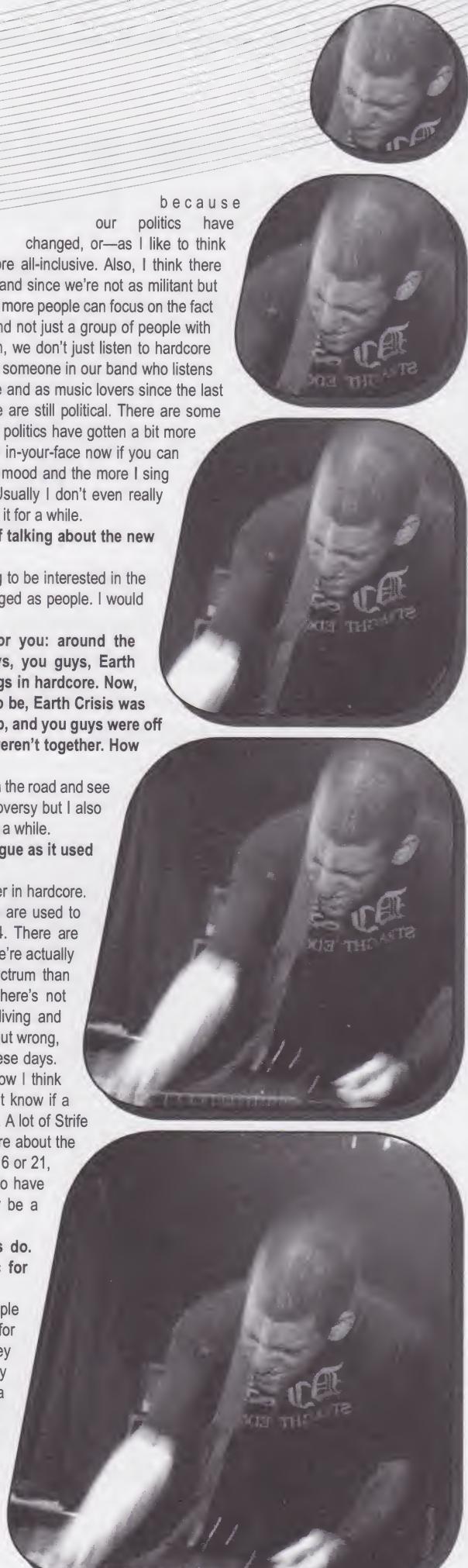
16-year-old kids living at home have no idea what it's like to actually live, so that was a major part of the problem. They were living in a dream world. Now, I'm very interested in straight-edge as a cult, if you will. Not so much as a brainwashing type thing, 'cause that's not how I see it at all. But, I'm interested in the fanatical tendencies of a small minority. They remind me of the fanatics in the Muslim world: those fanatics don't speak for what the religion is truly about or what the majority thinks, but rather they are the loudest and the most visible so they come to stand for what the religion is perceived as in the eyes of outsiders. I don't think the two groups are totally different. I mean, obviously to call a fanatical straightedge person a terrorist is stretching it, you know?

**I see what you mean. Luckily we've had very very few cases of outright violence in the case of straightedge kids.**

Just because you believe some of the ideas in a certain set of principals does not mean you condone the violence or terror that can come along with those principals when taken to a fundamental level. I like to think I respect people. It may be hard to see when you're screaming along with hundreds of straightedge kids a night, but I like to think that I am accepting of whatever people choose to do with their lives or what their bodies. It's for them to decide and not me.

**Right on. But what do you say to the kids who may have lost interest in Strife due to the fact that you're not a straight-edge band anymore?**

I think they'll be missing out. I know when I was 16 I was pretty upset when Mike Judge of the band Judge lost his edge. I was talking to a friend over in Europe and I told him how upset I was when some of my musical idols lost their edge. I'm sure there will be some people who disregard our band just



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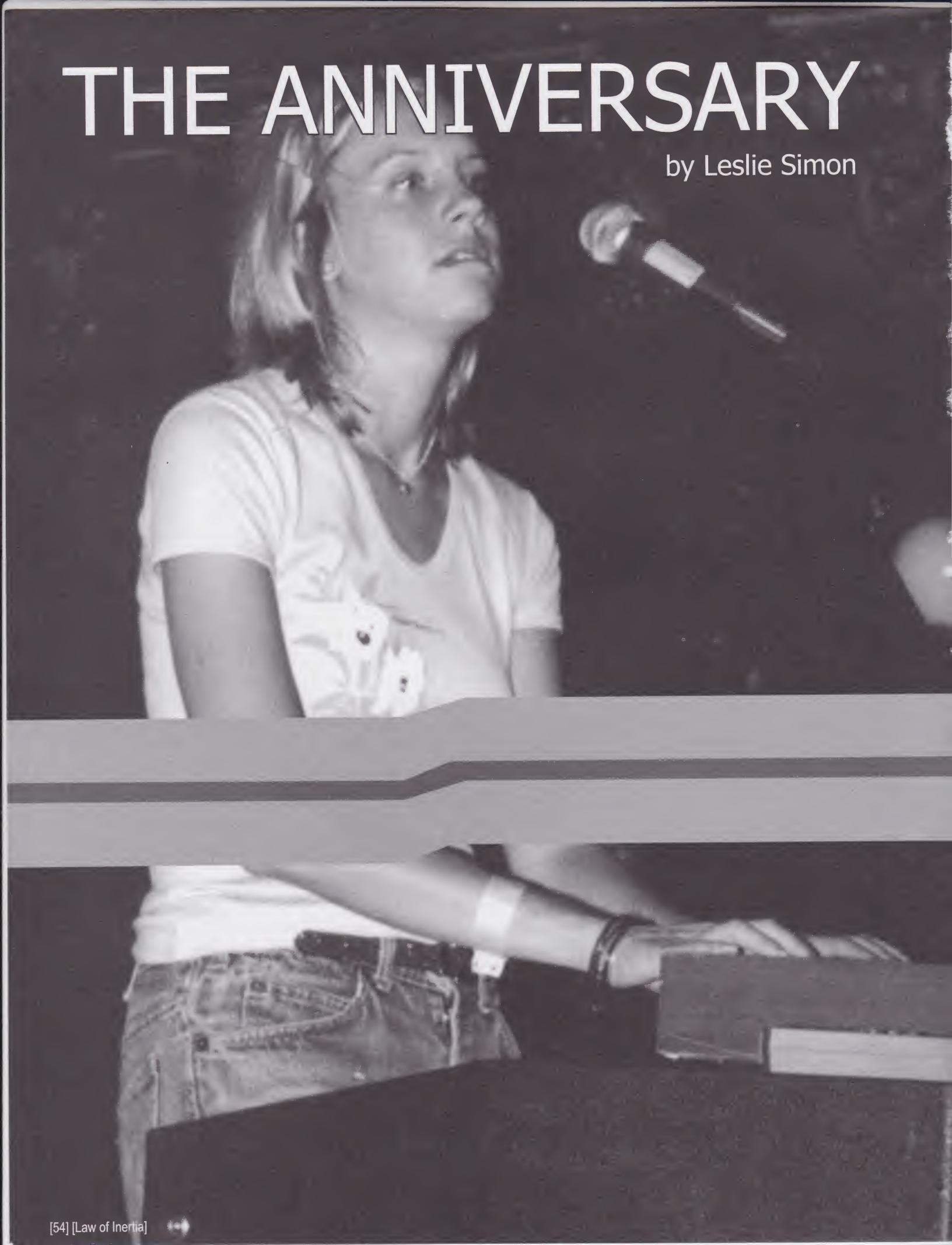
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# THE ANNIVERSARY

by Leslie Simon



**Close your eyes and it's the music you want to hold hands to, have first kisses to, and make love to. Open your eyes and it's the music that scores the movie that is your life. The Anniversary may not change the world but it just may change the way you listen to music. With the recent release of their second full-length album, *Your Majesty*, The Anniversary has proven that rock isn't dead—it's just in a coma and in dire need of an adrenaline shot. What's most impressive about the band is the mature musical evolution that's taken place from the time of their debut, *Designing A Nervous Breakdown*. Whereas *Breakdown* is a full-on synth-punk powerhouse, *Majesty* is more ethereal and atmospheric—like a dream that you never want to wake up from.**

I checked in with Adrienne Pope (keyboards/vocals) from a tour stop on the band's recent jaunt with Dashboard Confessional and Ben Kweller. A tenacious game of phone tag ensued, followed by my complete mental incompetence when it comes to working my tape recorder. Needless to say, the entire interview process mimicked the feeling you get when you spend hours toiling over a term paper only to have your computer crash before you get a chance to save your work. My apologies. Due to technical difficulties (i.e. the fact that I am have the mental capacity of an ADD kindergartener when it comes to maneuvering digital equipment) this interview took a few takes. Please stand by.

Ok, here comes the obligatory "woman in rock" question. Do you think that there ever comes a time in this whole indie rock scene where you have to sacrifice your femininity to fit into a primarily male music scene? I think that sometimes it makes me feel like I've lost part of being feminine. I feel sometimes, like right now I'm sitting in the back of the Winnebago playing Nintendo, but at the same time it's like I still enjoy that part. I used to wear, just like, T-shirts and jeans and shit when we'd play but now I'm trying to [fit the part better], like when we first started playing, I used to wear vintage prom dresses and stuff but now I'm just trying to be more feminine. Because I think that if you're on tour, and you're a girl, that's really all you've got.

Do you notice that you get a different response with fans than the boys in the band. Do you have a different rapport with them?

Yeah, well, a little bit. Actually, it's kinda in the same vein because girls come up to me and say, "It's so cool to be a girl in a band," whereas a guy would look at every other guy in a band and be like, "Oh, that's so cool they're in that..." So it's somewhat different but at the same time it's the same kind of comments except maybe sometimes different in that we're of different sexes...but they're all very complementary and nice.

What's one of the most memorable things someone's ever said to you?

Um, things like when people say your record changed their life. That's a really big compliment. Or when people say to us, "You make me want to be in a band." Or, you know, one time a girl wrote us a note that Josh brought backstage and it was like, "I have a couple friends that died and your record helped me get through that." So that was cool.

Was there ever an album that changed your life?

Um, in high school, *OK Computer* (laughter).

Why?

I just thought it was the best thing I'd ever heard. And now I listen to more records and think that. But if I honestly...if I think back to records that made me change what I wanted to do, seriously, at the time, in high school I listened to Hole a lot and *OK Computer* made me really want to play keyboards more.

So are you pro-Courtney Love or anti-Courtney Love? I'm pretty pro.

Do you think that press is a positive or negative force

in music?

I think Kurt Cobain said it best: "corporate magazines still suck." But you know, it can be so good for you. I mean, I look at Rolling Stone and Spin and all it is is nu-metal and things like that and that's kind of disheartening. But I think it's totally positive. What better thing for us than to have our record reviewed in that magazine and have people who wouldn't normally know of our band, see it and buy our record and come see us play. It's awesome.

Do you like the whole interview process?

I do. I like that I do a lot and they're all different.

Are there any topics or questions you're sick of talking about?

I get asked about being married a lot which is understandable because my name was changed for our new record. But a lot of people want to talk about that and it really has nothing to do with my band except for the fact that we're on Heroes & Villains with that band, The Get Up Kids. So it's like, no one asks Rob about me in interviews. You know what I mean? It doesn't bother me at all to say in an interview that I'm married but it bothers me for them to ask, "Well, what's that like?" That's a personal life thing. I mean, I would probably tell you that in a normal conversation but not in an interview. I had an interview where, literally, five out of the ten questions were about that.

I think what's so interesting about that is that being married is such a conventional role for a woman and being in a rock band is somewhat unconventional so having those bridged together makes people wonder how you make it work. Typically women are supposed to be at home with their husband. But you guys have two extraordinary careers in the same industry so you totally know where the other is coming from— it's also kind of intriguing for those to understand how you do make it work.

Yeah, I can see that. Another thing I'm getting tired of being asked is, "Why is your new record so different?" It's like, why do you need to know? It just is. You know what I mean?

Well, it's the idea that if something ain't broke, don't fix it. But bands don't grow if they don't change and evolve stylistically.

Right.

So, on this topic, the record sounds different. Given. But was it something you could've predicted or was it you growing as people?

I could've predicted it two months after we put out our first record. The month it came out, I knew the next one would be totally different.

How did you know?

Just what we were listening to and how we were all growing and stuff like that.

Have you noticed a backlash? Like people who flat out tell you that they don't like the record and that you should go back to the first one.

Oh yeah!

How do you respond to that?

I say, "Well, thank you for saying that and I appreciate your opinion and I'm glad you still come to our shows." The people that say it are the ones who come to the shows. I mean, we get a lot of email too saying, "How could you do this? How could you?" [over-dramatically] And it's like, what? If you have that much spare time on your hands, I think you should try to do something else...when it's negative e-mails and negative guestbook signings to the band.

Your fans are pretty extreme, following your every move and analyzing your every word. You must have gotten a hell of a response when you put that keyboard up for sale on eBay.

It's really kind of weird. Like when I put that thing on eBay, I for some reason decided to put my AOL account. And now every time I go online, I get literally 17 instant messages from people like, "Is this Adrienne from The Anniversary?" "Is this really you?" It's fine and to be honest, I'll respond to every

one of them, but not when I just wanna be checking my email. So I have to change my screen name now (laughter).

Well at least they like you enough to stalk you. It could be worse, they could despise you.

Totally. It's always a good thing and I appreciate that people want to talk to me that much.

So, do you mind if we go back to some of the questions I asked you before—so I actually have them on tape. Ok, if you could describe how you first met Justin and Josh.

Justin and Josh went to high school together. They were in different bands. Justin wrote a song for his band that had a girl in it and the drummer from Justin's band was going to my high school. They asked me to come play with their band and when I got there they said that they were actually gonna start another band. So then Josh and Justin and I started a band together and then our drummer moved to Boston to go to college and then Jim and Chris joined the band.

So do you have any formal music training?

Oh yeah, that's all I do. I'm a year away from a music ed. degree in voice. And I have a voice minor in college.

Are you planning on going back for more school after you graduate?

Uh, yeah definitely. Sometime. I'm gonna ride this out first.

And you had said before that you wanted to be a teacher.

Yeah, I did want to be a teacher. I don't mean to say that—I do wanna be a teacher. If being in a band doesn't work out, I wanna be a teacher. Being a teacher, sometimes I think would be my number one thing to do. There are, like, two days a week where I'm like, "I should've been a music teacher. Argh." But, whatever. I love what I'm doing.

Could you really see yourself doing anything else at this point in your life?

No, I wanna be doing this as much as I can.

What's the best part of being on tour?

It's being a family. It's really cool. When you get home, you don't get an opportunity to do that, so going tour and having that is really awesome.

Do you guys develop animosity towards each other after being together in such saturated periods of time?

We go home and then call each other and ask, "Well, what are you doing?" And then we go meet up at open-mic night at the bar.

Are you always going to stay in Kansas?

Probably. Well, for the time being. I can't say in three years we're all gonna be there but we'll figure it out.

So we're gonna do rapid fire. I'm going to name a band member and you are going to say an adjective or some kind of phrase that is immediately associated with them. Ok. Ready?

Yep.

Justin.

Confident.

Chris.

Force-oriented. Hilarious.

Josh.

Very—uh, let me think about this for a second. I have a rapid thing in mind, I'm just not saying it. Conscientious and very caring.

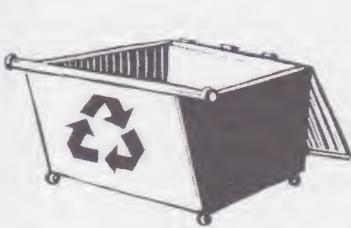
Jim.

The smart one.

Adrienne.

Very sensitive. Overly sensitive. But, working on that.

Photo by Jerry Guzman



# Street Chic

BY HEIDI DIEHL

Right now there are twelve bricks of baked tofu, 23 containers of soy yogurt, and large piles of kale in my refrigerator. I have a shopping plan that allows me to incorporate quantities of upscale food items into my diet at low, low prices—not a membership at the wholesale warehouse, but a familiarity with local dumpsters. Lest this turn into one of those “how to maximize your coupon dollar” kind of article, I will say that while I most definitely dumpster dive to save money, it would be nice to get closer to not using that coupon dollar at all.

Dumpster diving is as nasty as you want it to be. Let me shatter the image you have of me gnawing on old crusts of pizza. In my neighborhood, the produce market disdains even mildly bruised vegetables, the bakery makes fresh bagels every morning, the supermarket accidentally slashes packages with box cutters. And so there's a lot of edible food in the garbage. While it's true that there are health codes that lead stores to throw some of this food away, it also seems that so much of it shouldn't go to waste.

The abundance of discarded food is usually available without a whole lot of work. In the New York metropolitan area, many stores are not compatible with using dumpsters to get rid of their waste, placing their trash in bags on the sidewalk instead, making the foraging process easy. Dumpsters themselves are fairly organized; many places sort their throwaways, and it doesn't take long to find good stuff. Lots of times my local health food store sweeps all the expired products off the shelf and into one big bag, which is awfully convenient. Back up, you're thinking, isn't it expired for a reason? (Those of you Wegman's shoppers will recall Danny Wegman's thoughtful letters printed on his milk cartons: products are usually good for several days after the sell-by date). I use the same kind of common sense in the dumpster as I do in the kitchen, and I've never gotten sick from salvaged food.

There's a certain irony in a middle class kid promoting trash-picking; while I choose to go through the garbage, I could also decide, if the trash is particularly unpromising one night, to go to the grocery store and buy food. Busted living is a lot easier to take when it's a choice. It's easy, as a dumpster diver, to slip into self-righteousness (“I live off the [extremely wasteful and over-commodified] land! All I eat is garbage! I'm a warrior!”). I can't make these claims. I do what I can with the waste in my neighborhood, but I still buy some of my food. As my friend claimed when she began losing her seat on the vegan train: “it's all about reduction.” Some may say that's a bit of a cop-out, but I think

it's a realistic one. Still, I think you could probably get everything you need from the trash, if you have the time to find it.

While it's true that where we buy food makes a difference, not buying it at all is even better. This is not only because I am cheap and like to spend my time getting over-involved in personal projects, but also because I'm not so into capitalism and its various party favors, such as migrant labor, giant pesticide conglomerates, etc. etc.

Lots of people agree with me on this one, and probably feel powerless in the same ways that I do. And lots of people look to the trash as sources of stuff, whether a regular search for food or the occasional carrying home of an old chair left out on the curb. It's a tricky balance, because while I'm glad for the piles of free vegetables coming my way, I'm distressed by the amount of good stuff going into the garbage to rot while more and more is produced and bought. So while I encourage everyone to check out the trash, I think it's important not to stop there, not to be satisfied with merely recycling. It might make sense to figure out how to share our resources before they end up in the garbage. And before they run out entirely.

I don't know about you, but much of the time, shopping makes me bored. Chain stores are chaining themselves all over the world. There are no surprises in the homogenized aisles of corporate America. This is why I like thrift stores and why I like used bookstores. This is why I dumpster dive. It's like opening a present from those strange friends of the family: you just cannot predict what's going to be inside. A sparkly silver purse? A case of soy milk?

I've been falling off the vegan train myself for a while now, but my heart still beats wildly every time I find discarded vegan baked goods. Freeganism (and dumpstering in general) allows cheating in a system we have don't have much say in (I sometimes wonder if straight-sedge people would consider half empty cocktails leftover in bars freegan).

Gleaning the trash puts you in a strange place, giving you access to things you might not want to consume with actual cash money. While I won't go into a Starbucks, I will go behind a Starbucks to look for bagels at the end of the day. But is this form of resistance enough? While it's easy to see what's wrong with ultra-powerful corporations who commodify just about everything, it's not always so easy to know what to do to change it.

Dumpster diving is a secret action—something we do quietly in the middle of the night.

And while there are personal benefits, we have to get creative and motivated about busting up the system that creates so much waste. We have to think of things we can do blatantly, in broad daylight, to voice our concern. Dumpster diving is not a long-term solution.

But for now, it seems an appropriate response, or at the very least, an interesting one. At the big university in my hometown, the end of the school year, as students move out, marks a time of bountiful trash. A walk down frat row in mid-May yields small appliances, art supplies, books, liquor, televisions, and while I really don't need most of this stuff, I'm fascinated by the ways lives pile up in the garbage; how things that clearly once had meaning to someone no longer do. I've found clothing from former sweeties, even old photos and letters on the curbs in springtime. While finding a book lovingly inscribed “to Reuben, Christmas 1987,” is a bit creepy, like inadvertently spying your neighbor cooking naked. It also points to the disposability of our lives. When you can purchase almost anything (and advertising links intangible things, like love and freedom and happiness, to products), why shouldn't you throw your stuff out, only to buy more? I'm not trying to be pessimistic (or claim that my life is sparse and virtuous), only hoping to point out that while, right now, we don't have too much say in the arrangement of the corporate world, we can choose how to respond to it.

Regardless of where the best place to pick up a used television in New York is, my favorite vegetable dumpster is in the alley behind the Low Down, Mt. Vernon, NY's venerated and endangered metal bar, where I can find artichokes and hang out with the rhythm section of the Carnage Crew at the same time. Those nights are beautiful indeed, because here in the alley of the Low Down (which regularly threatens to close forever), as subcultures crash into each other, as vegetables are rescued from certain death in the landfill, as many middle-aged men expound on keeping their scene alive, culture is actively preserved. When we save things, whether discarded artichokes or metal, and when we create things, whether a community or a stir-fry, we are resisting the pull of our hyper-consumer society. I get worried about the small, homemade parts of our culture getting swept away by the corporate melting-pot that affects America more and more on a daily basis. Therefore, I firmly believe that resistance can take many forms—including day-old bagels.





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If there's anything I hate when I'm reading an interview, it's where the writer introduces the band by saying, "I was never a really big fan of this so-and-so, but...", and then goes on to list what they did on their latest release to change his or her opinion. I never had anything against Cursive. I just never gave them a chance.

I remember when our reviewer Adam (aka the jaded one) got all of his CDs stolen last year and asked if he could have my copy of *Domestica*. I had listened to it once or twice and it didn't immediately impress me so I said he could and never really thought about Cursive again. I mentally filed them away into the "sappy midwestern emo" category and forgot about them. I was way into Iron Maiden at that point and figured I had enough sad bastard music. That is, until I got Cursive's *Burst and Bloom* EP in the mail and it changed everything.

The intricate songs were like stories: they had a beginning, middle, an end – plus plenty of conflict. The only difference was that the entire EP was a never-ending climax. Songs like "Burst and Bloom" floated from beautiful orchestral musings to discordant guitars and slamming vocals without sounding the least bit forced. In fact, I couldn't imagine the songs doing anything else. The most notable addition to the Cursive all-star team is full-time cellist Gretta Cohen. Her soaring lines escalated the teeming tension of the music and fit perfectly into Cursive's ornate compositions.

I've said this in reviews before, but the songs on *Burst and Bloom* are so well orchestrated and multi-textured that no matter how many times you listen to it, you'll discover something new. A bleeping keyboard, hidden guitar countermelody, or painstaking cello sections – sometimes serene, sometimes cacophonous, but always beautiful.

Lyrically, frontman Tim Kasher doesn't hold back (a tendency which has strained some of his relationships: see interview). There is the depressing ("Give in, Give in, Give up/ All these verses share a theme/ we don't amount to anything") the poetic ("Your navel is yearning for an extension – a ghost limb/ it can't detach from mother's loving grasp") and the mocking ("a cheap strategy, a marketing scheme/ building awareness for the next LP"). But, like the music, the varied yet interrelated moods are what make Cursive's music so cathartic.

In the last issue I called Cursive the indie's answer to Radiohead and I stand by that claim. Cursive takes chances and is able to do something completely new, not for the sake of being different, but because there's no other way they could write music. Plus, they're less pretentious than the Amnesiacs. As cliched as it sounds, I can't really explain why I liked this EP so much. I read a lot of fiction and I like any good story, Cursive's songs take you on an introspective journey and by the end you feel drained, but also like you've gained something. How many records can you say that about?

As you can tell from the interview, Tim Kasher isn't a very talkative guy. But you know what, he doesn't have to be. Like his Omaha kindred spirit Conor Oberst, one Cursive song says more about love, anger, and everything in between than most of us manage to blurt out to our nearest and dearest in a whole month.

I wrote a review of your last record that compared Cursive to Radiohead, not necessarily musically, but in your deviation from what's predictable in the independent music landscape. I was curious, do you feel a kinship with them?

I do. I think I had a hard time keeping up when they released two records so I've yet to give *Amnesiac* the appropriate listen. But I listened to *Kid A* quite a few times and thought it was really intriguing. As obscure as it was, you really kind of caught on to the music anyway and by the third listen it was like I knew whole record already. But I haven't really kept listening to it since; it's like *Kid A* was a good movie, but it's not one you watch over and over again.

Is it a conscious effort to try to stray from established norms or does your music just end up that way?

I try to be very conscious whenever we're making a decision musically on any given song or part that you want to make sure that you're not rehashing a scene. I think that I'm kind of guilty of that, through growing up, I really appreciate older Cursive records. I like them, but I feel like I was not very courageous in taking steps in my own direction, instead of playing to a scene; and that's kind of safe – especially if you're a nobody (laughter). I don't know if I necessarily liked the stuff I was writing before Cursive but at least it was unique and it was my take on how to write a song and not someone else's take on what a scene should sound like. I don't know, I may be being a little hard on myself, but I think it's kinda accurate. It probably

helps us, because then you have all these scenester indie rock kids or whatever, they're like, "Oh, that sounds like the type of style I like!" And then from there, hopefully they maybe recognize decent songwriting or something like that. The only thing I hold onto the old style or idea in what we're doing with Cursive is that I still like to keep it in that kind of frustrated, aggressive kind of confused genre that sounds a little bit uncomfortable. So you don't have to be loud or soft or anything. With *Burst and Bloom*, I still want to go further with that. I can look at a song like "Mothership" and it's like, 'You know, I hear a lot of 'post-punk guitar style' in that. That doesn't sound unlike Fugazi in a sense...'

**Is there anything wrong with that?**

No, not really. I think that when I wrote it I recognized in the genre it was what I considered to be a more clever guitar part that had yet to be introduced. There's always something to be positive about. We are pretty much done writing the next record, and maybe that's just what I have that on my mind right now. I'm really excited about all those songs. Some of the new songs are very genre specific, but in genres we don't really play in that much, and for me that's really exciting.

**What types of genres?**

Nothing outlandish, but the first song on the record is just like an upbeat punk rock song. I look at it in two ways: People who listen to Cursive will be like "Jesus, this is a little offhand for where they've been going," but then other people will listen to it and will probably think it's just another generic band (laughter). I guess that's just a risk I'm willing to take. Some of the songs are more upbeat, swingy rock n' roll, and I've always been really leery of in the past because I like everything to be so disciplined and structured and staccato and controlled. I don't mind at all not having to be like that all the time.

**Are you using more sequencers and samplers on the new record?**

No we aren't doing anything like that; I think the progression is mostly in style. I think *Domestica* was a good climax of the style we had been doing and the EP was throwing out some ideas that were a little bit different from what we'd been doing and maybe a little bit different in general. Somehow, critics and various reviewers think that Cursive is its own band and has its own style and it's really the biggest complement that you can get as songwriters. I think it's a process of tossing out everything that sounds like something else and I think a lot of musicians are afraid to do that because you don't want to toss it out if it sounds good.

**How often do you throw out parts?**

All the time. Ideas are gonna pop into your head of whatever you listen to that day. I like Pinback a lot and I kind of had to get them out of my system so I didn't write songs like that. And also on this next record, there's stuff that maybe could be categorized somewhere in that, but it's okay to me because it's a style that I've been trying to work towards myself.

**You can also argue that everything's already in done in music, anyway.**

And that's why I'm glad that I can even get anyone to say we've made our own niche, especially in hard rock; I feel hard rock is so generic.

**How do you feel about the bands you play with on tour? Are you ever impressed or are you always thinking, "I've heard this before"?**

I think I always try to remain really considerate because there's a lot of bands that are in a harder vein of music and I just don't hear a lot in that style of music. It's not about the songs anymore. It's about being aggressive or being loud, and that's your point – and that sucks. Songs should be aggressive because the song is going that way; it shouldn't be self-inflicted onto the song. I feel bad saying that, because it's a lot bands that I play with and it's not that I disrespect them. I could say it's the style of music, and that's completely fair. I don't know. I sometimes like to just dismiss it as "Oh, I'm getting older so I don't listen to hard rock," but I don't think I listened to a ton back in the day, you know? (laughter) I think I just like the emotion of anger, and I like when I listen to music and I get really riled up. Did you ever listen to PJ Harvey's *Rid of Me*?

**Yeah.**

I think that's a better hard rock record than anything by any metal band or hardcore band cause it's real. She was so pissed – you can feel it – and you get so pissed and you feel so much listening to it; it just came across really well. It's just good to feel when you listen to the shit (laughter). Loud's not a feeling.

**So getting back to Cursive, on *Burst and Bloom*, is the song "Sink the Beat" a stab at publicists or a self-deprecating joke?**

I'd say the second one is a little closer. I'd say it's not so much a joke, I guess, but definitely the self-deprecating part. The short of it is that Matt and I in particular do a lot of the discussing as far as what we should be doing with the band. And with *Domestica* just media wise, touring wise,

and selling wise, it did a lot better than we expected and finally we got kinda swept up by the whole like, "What do we do now?" We wanted to do an EP, buy some time, and get some more good songs out there while we worked on a really good full-length. And we kinda got disenchanted by the time we actually had the songs written and worked on lyrics. You just keep writing songs and you don't have to put one over on anyone or like stay in the limelight. I appreciate any small frenzy that might have been going on, but you shouldn't work off of that, you should keep it all internal and just keep playing and writing good music. It's [the lyrics] a joke, I point the finger at ourselves. What's astounding to me is that in the lyrics to that song, I wouldn't say a lot of people, but more people than I imagined interpreted those lyrics as far as I've had a couple guys tell me, "That was so cool: totally hyping yourself, glorifying yourself." Like [funny voice]— "Hey America, this is the latest from Saddle Creek!" It's crazy. I mean I could see if it's just on paper, it's a lot of inflection in my voice, it's very robotic. So it's not like it's absurd, but at the same time I thought saying things like "hip hop and you don't stop..."

**I know you weren't happy with the publicity sticker for *Domestica*. I thought maybe it was a reaction to that as well.**

No, it's not really a reaction to that. I feel like that would be kind of like picking a fight with Robb [Saddle Creek owner] or something. But as far as that's concerned, I still don't know where I stand with it. Just the other week Robb and I were talking about that again because The Goodlife is putting a new record and he would joke around saying, "Here's a collection of songs now that Tim's single again." But he still holds, "It was a good one-sheet, right? A lot of people talked about it, you gained a lot of attention." I can't argue with that; I'm not gonna disagree, but it was at whose expense, you know? Not necessarily mine. I'm not being a baby, but like my ex-wife, my grandma – it really hurt some people and I'm uncomfortable with it still. But yeah, I'm not real big on explaining my private life and why I wrote what I did.

**But don't you feel like writing such personal songs makes you extra vulnerable?**

Yeah, definitely. With Cursive it's kind of easy at this point because you have most of the audience on your side and so it kind of gives you that freedom to express yourself however you want. Most of the people are going to stand behind you, so there is vulnerability but it's not so much. I was talking to a close friend of mine, she is taking a special public speaking class for speaking in front of people – there's a special class for people who freeze up in front of crowds – and she's like, "How can you do it in front of people?" And it's completely different. I'm not going up in front of 250 strangers – they know who I am and they know what I'm there for and it's way more comfortable. But with the Goodlife it's still kind of like building, and especially on the first two tours, there were some songs that were kind of uncomfortable because people were talking.

**What is the function of The Good Life? Do you feel limited by Cursive?**

Yeah, The Good Life [material] isn't really appropriate for a Cursive record. I mean I think it helps to have a really eclectic album, but I always felt those [Good Life] songs were a little more of a stretch. But it was never a big deal because I've always written those songs regardless, so it didn't really matter if they were released or not. I ended up doing it at a point where I was getting a little fed up because it was before *Domestica*. I wanted to get Cursive back together, and I graduated college, and I had actually been married and divorced at that point, and I was like, "I don't want to do anything else. I just want to play music for a while." And Cursive just wasn't active so I was like, "Fuck it. I have plenty of time to do another band," and so I did, and now I'm really awfully busy. Busy enough that I didn't have to do another band – I think Cursive takes up enough time. But at the same time, I don't mind; it's good to be really busy in music. Or just in general, something that you like a lot.

**What's the difference between the two acts?**

It's so much of who the musicians are. I still bring songs in, but I can write the songs knowing what Clint is going to do with them or what Ted's gonna play – I can anticipate that they're willing to handle it and do something really great. But it's also different styles of writing for the two bands. It's definitely more instrument driven for Cursive and much more melody-driven for The Good Life.

**I was curious, between Bright Eyes and The Faint, how much of an effect has Saddle Creek had on your music and is there a big sense of community in Omaha?**

Yeah, it's very much a community. All the bands there – I can't speak enough of them – they're all really close friends, even despite the fact that we're on tour a lot and aren't around each other a lot as a result. And you know, even at this point – getting older and older – we tend to have our own circles of good friends that we hang out with in Omaha. There's still this strong bond that we find when we're around each other or playing together. Last summer The Faint had a really big CD release show in Omaha, and The Faint and Bright Eyes and Cursive played, and it was one of the best times – we all just had such a great time. We've all been doing this for so many years; it was great to play a show together. Cursive went out with Desaparecidos and Sorry About Dresden and that was great just touring around with all these guys. And The Good Life is gonna go out with Mayday and Bright Eyes in May, so it's going to be another situation like that. I love doing it.

**I know you're pretty close with Conor [Oberst, Bright Eyes]. Is it frustrating that one of you is always gone? Can you still call up him up and ask if he wants to write some music at two in the morning?**

You know, right now Conor and I are at more of an okay level of not seeing each other that much (laughter). I know last year it was really annoying cause we were living in the same house and we were rarely ever living there at the same time – it was kind of frustrating. But right now we're in different houses and I've kind of been working and he's been out a lot, so we just kind of talk to each other here and there and catch up, you know? But we, I don't know, the way he and I have always been is we go through seasons where we're around each other everyday and other seasons where we're too busy with other shit. I'm usually busy with some girl. I'm one those boys who gets just crazy about one person or another you know. But he does too, actually.

**And then you can both write songs about it...**

You gotta dump 'em so you can write songs about them. Or get dumped, I guess that would probably be better... probably get more juice out of that.

**Photos by Adam Sherrerd**

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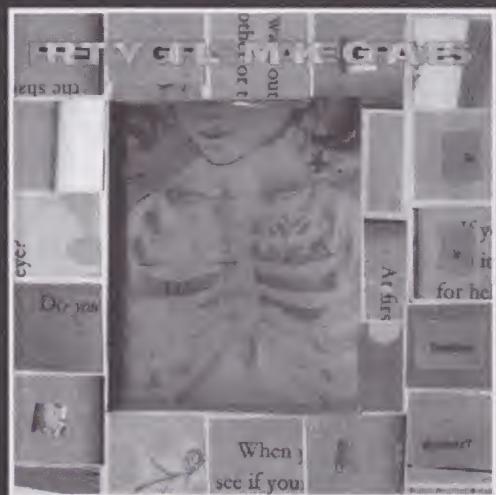
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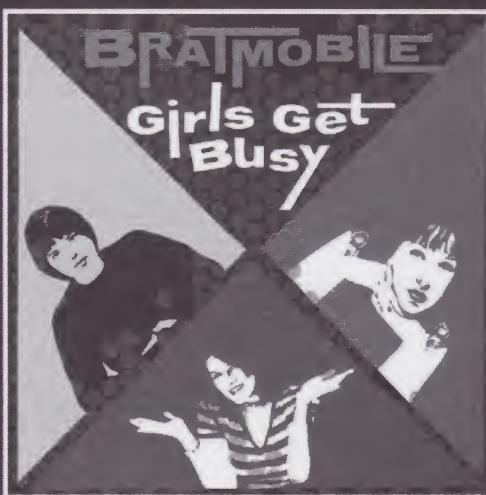
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# Chai Hulud

*by Ross*

*Shai Hulud is the best hardcore band in America and I can prove it. Even after nearly three years of almost no touring and virtually no new releases, if you go to a Shai Hulud show in any town on the east coast you will no doubt find a bunch of hardcore kids screaming the band's lyrics with more loyalty, more inspiration, and more ferociousness than any other hardcore band out there could muster. As a matter of fact, much to the dismay of the publicists I work with, I rarely go to shows, but two out of the six or seven shows I've been to in the past four months have been Shai Hulud shows. And this Poughkeepsie by way of Florida metalcore band can give any other outfit a run for their money before blowing them off stage. Look at Geert grab the kids in the first row by their collars and pull them in as fifteen people pile upon each other to scream the words to any song in the band's repertoire; watch their drummer beat the living shit out of his drumset like he's clubbing someone to death for looking at him the wrong way; get the fuck out of the way before the two guitarists plow you over in between monster runs up and down the neck of their guitars—this band is unstoppable, and I firmly believe this. Even after replacing virtually every member of the band (including their singer who went on to play guitar in a little band known as A New Found Glory), the band remains as tight as ever and as pummeling as any band ever to label themselves a hardcore act.*

*I'm even luckier than most of you out there in hardcore heaven. I have come to call Matt Fox, the band's guitarist who acts as the spiritual center of Shai Hulud, a good friend in the past few months. I have found Matt to be one of the most blunt, perceptive, and sharp-witted people I've met in a long time. He truly embodies the spirit of what hardcore stands for... specifically, staying focused and setting goals for yourself. Add a huge helping of musical talent in there and you get a hell of a great guy.*

*Recently I had a chance to talk to Matt after Shai Hulud opened for Sick of it All here in New York City. I didn't get to see Sick of it All, but I did get to talk to a guy I have come to respect and admire. Not to mention his talent for making me dance around my room in reckless abandon while his records on the stereo disturb the next door neighbors.*

*[Talking about what hardcore bands that play with tons of heart]*

When you think of Bane or Shai Hulud or Poison the Well you're thinking of bands where the heart

in their music and how much time and energy they put into their music comes through very much. I think that bands like that will have kids going ape-shit time and time again because of how much heart comes across when they play their music.

The emotion goes straight from the bands' hearts into the hearts of the kids who listen to it, and that can make for some amazing concerts.

Do you think the music you play is emo? I mean, you're wearing a Jawbox shirt right now so I'm interested if you think Shai Hulud or Bane plays emo music.

No, I don't think we play emo and I definitely don't think Bane plays emo. Emo to me is a dirty word and I'm not going to mention any bands in particular in case any of them are reading this, but the first emo band I ever heard had whiny vocals, they weren't very good musicians, and very out of key music. It seemed very insincere and contrived to me when I first heard it. That's why a band like Jawbox or Sunny Day—great bands that are considered emo—I'm always defensive when people call them emo. I don't appreciate when people put that tag on great bands like Jawbox or Sunny Day Real Estate who transcend the limits that more typical emo bands have placed upon the label. I don't consider the bands I like to be emo, even if everyone in the world considers a band like Sensefield to be emo.

**So, if you had to describe your own band how would you do so?**

Um, emotionally aggressive. I think we have a lot of heart but I don't think any band out there has more heart than Bane. They definitely are not emo but when they get on the stage there is an emotional energy there not found in almost every other band. I believe both of our bands are emotional, but to classify a genre of musical





emotional is ridiculous. To classify individual bands that way is a different story.

**I think you guys play with more sincerity than most hardcore bands. Bands like Hatebreed or Earth Crisis just seem to be beef-head tough-guys to me, whereas you, Bane, and Poison the Well are clearly playing with more personality and sincerity—even if you don't want to label that as emo. So, I guess the next question is what are the tangible elements of your presentation or sound that causes me to think that?**

I'm not sure why you think that, but I'll tell you what I think. Everyone that knows me knows I am true. I have twitches and I don't hide them, I have a goofy sense of humor, I love the Muppets and Sesame Street, and I also love my metal. I love brutal metal and I don't hide that. This comes out in our music—I am who I am whether I'm on stage or playing guitar alone in my room—and it comes out in the music of Bane, Most Precious Blood, and Poison the Well. There's no facades there, which serves to makes the music even better. Maybe it's because there is no fronting, but somehow the music of these people becomes more intense and more visceral as a result. I think bands that try to be themselves in everything musical they do win themselves a special place in a fan's heart that a band that is too emo, too tough, too straight-edge simply cannot do. We go out there and we don't try to cover up the fact that we're nerdy or goofy. We sometimes throw our hands in the air and yell "motherfucker" and look tough during the mosh part, but we also dance and smile and laugh all through the course of a single song. And it's all because we're

not trying to be anything we're not. When the tough part is over, Matt and I will pretend we're in Iron Maiden, I'll rub Geert's head, Geert will grab my privates. That's charming.

**There's definitely something to be said for a band that doesn't take themselves very seriously even if they do take their music very seriously. And I've heard that you take your music very seriously. Would you agree with that?**

Oh yeah, everyone that has ever been in a band with me knows I'm a perfectionist to the point of lunacy. They'll say, "Matt, it's fine," and I'll say, "no, do you hear that? I have to fix that for the twelfth time." It's because I am very very picky with what I put forth under my name. There are some things I've released with Shai Hulud that I still wish I could go back and change. Without



a twelve-billion dollar budget it will never be 100% perfect, but if it's not at least 98% with me then I keep doing it over until it's right. The other guys take it very seriously too. You have to do that if you want to put out a quality project. My father used to tell me that penmanship counts. That can mean a lot of different things, but to me it means that every little detail is important to an overall production. **I agree with you and I think there's something to be said for every tight-as-fuck note that took you 30 times to do. It shows in the end.**

We try hard, you know? If I got a new Metallica album and if I heard a chord or a note that was out of tune or in the wrong key I'd be like, "Oh Metallica!" From a fan's perspective, if Bane put out an album and it was out of tune I'd be upset. I want the bands I love to be perfect and I want my band to be perfect so maybe the kids that love my band will feel the same way about Shai Hulud as I do about, say, Metallica. I try to give to the fans what I'd expect from other bands that I listen to.

**It's interesting. Tonight, I'm not sure how many kids knew your stuff here in NYC—even though a lot of them were screaming your lyrics. But those kids were going fucking nuts tonight during your set, whether or not they knew your stuff. Four years ago you guys were the big things in hardcore. You and Sons of Abraham were huge everywhere. Now, you're just getting back on your feet again.**

That's totally true. Where Poison the Well is right now is where we should have been about three years ago. When we came out it caught on, everyone really liked



the band. It was hard to tour because Chad was in high school. So he could only do weekends and summers and spring breaks. And then when he was about to graduate high school he left the band and he began doing A New Found Glory. Then we had to find a new singer and guitar players and a bassist and then the drummer took forever. Now, we're back on our feet and we're ready to rock. And we're extremely happy that the fans—I don't even like to say fans, because they're friends. We don't treat people as fans, we treat them as friends. I'm really happy that even during the absence kids have stuck by us. Even though we really weren't on the scene for a few years and we didn't really release anything, kids are still coming to our shows. Especially with the new song "Set Your Body Ablaze" on the split with Another Victim on Trustkill, kids seem to still dig what we're doing. That means a lot to us because they like the old stuff and the new stuff. I can't wait to get the new album out because it's our best material and I can't wait to see everyone screaming along.

**You know, I've never met you before and you're such a nice guy. And Geert seems like he's a pretty goofy guy himself, but at the same time you're playing these balls-to-the-wall metal riffs and Geert is screaming his head off, "trust no one!" and the fact that your albums titles are pretty bleak—it seems you guys have such a profound hatred of man if you'll pardon the pun. Am I the only one who sees the contradiction there?**

One of the best compliments we ever got was when someone wrote the lyrics in hearts and said, "you know a band is sincere when you read the lyrics and see conflicting and contradicting emotions portrayed. Not contradicting in words, but rather in emotions." He was an older guy and he went on and said, "I really appreciate your band because I can see that it's genuine."

**Do you write the lyrics?**

In the past I've written the majority of the lyrics, now Geert and I are doing it together. The band is definitely contradictory to our personalities. Right after "Hearts Once Nourished..." came out I was in a music store in Florida and some kid came up to me in a music store and said, "hey I love the album." I thanked him and he asked me if I wanted to grab some dinner then we went back to my house to hang out. When we get to my house the first thing he sees is my Kermit the frog doll sitting on my bed and my Mickey paintings and he's like, "what the fuck? I thought you wrote all the lyrics." I was like, "yeah I do," and he was dumbstruck. We actually have it on our frequently asked questions on our website. When you pick up a pen you become a lot stronger, a lot bolder, a lot smarter.

**You'd think so, but I think a lot of people do not.**

Well in our case when we wrote the lyrics for the song "Love is the Fall of Every Man" it was about moving past

relationships that were unhealthy, and none of us were able to do that in our real lives. But, when you pick up a pen and you spill your heart out in what is essentially poetry, you become bold and strong and it does help you move on. It's cathartic to sit down and write about your feelings. When it comes to whether or not our band is more intelligent than others or are we playing with more emotion, no we're not, but I think we are being more honest, and that is what I find to be very very important in my music. Humans by design are flawed are contradictory and I and Geert and Matt Fletcher try to show this in our music. We try to be sincere. There are absolutely no points won for a band that tries to portray themselves as people they are not. And we firmly believe this to be the central point of our band.

**I'm the type of guy that thinks there's a lot to be angry about. I almost feel that if people aren't angry at life then they need to wake up and smell the coffee, 'cause there's more to the world to be pissed-off about than there is to be happy about. And to be honest, sitting around talking about how nice people are and how beautiful life can be isn't going to help the world at all.**

You know what, I agree with you completely.

**But, there's something to be said for someone who is angry yet nice as well. And that seems to be you guys.**

In my opinion pleasantries are very important. I am a big fine of politeness. I always say please and thank you. A lot of people like to cause a ruckus. You'll here people say, "I was at the show and there was a riot and it was fucking awesome." I don't think that's awesome, I think violence is horrible. I don't think conceding and conforming to what society demands of us is favorable either, but causing a ruckus has never been my thing. I like to be pleasant, I like to be approachable, I like to make people happy. I like

to scream "motherfucker" and look pissed and at the same time I like to leave funny answering-machine messages and have fun when the show is over and done. But, yes, there are a lot of things to really have a problem with. My main problem in life—sort of my mission—is personal communication and the lack of the ability to communicate. A lot of people have a hard time communicating, a lot of people are very fake to themselves... it's one thing if you have a hard time being honest with those you interact with, but when you start lying to yourself is when all hell breaks loose. And too many people I have known in my life lie to themselves. People who promote random chaos, people who lie to themselves and lie to others, and people who don't know how to communicate, that, in a nutshell—and I really mean in a nutshell—is the crux of what Shai Hulud discusses. At the same time it's good to get it out and have an outlet to anger.

**The brilliance is that you guys recognize your emotions. You guys are saying, it seems to me, that you're not different than anyone else—you can get pissed and angry and mad, and music is your way to let out your frustrations in a peaceful, non-aggressive way. I think a lot of bands would say, "this is about being stabbed in the back," whereas it seems like your band takes more of a "this is what it feels like to be stabbed in the back."**

The members of Shai Hulud are human. Ross, I make so many mistakes. The only difference between myself and the people I come into contact with is that I am always conscious of my mistakes. Even if I'm not man enough to say I'm sorry to people I am always conscious of my mistakes and I try to not make them in the future. To learn from my mistakes.

**What's really interesting to me is that the bands you see yourself**

**in league with—Bane and Most Precious Blood for instance—are playing three totally different types of hardcore with totally different styles.**

I agree, we're very diverse. You can't battle those bands when it comes to heart. I mean, honestly you have to have heart to first make their bands what they are, and then continue doing this. No one makes any money from their band so to keep on going on tour and playing out and recording you have to seriously believe in what you're doing and believe that you're doing something unique. And, Most Precious Blood and Bane are doing something different and more proficient than any other hardcore bands. Neither of us sound anything like but we are completely on the same wave length.

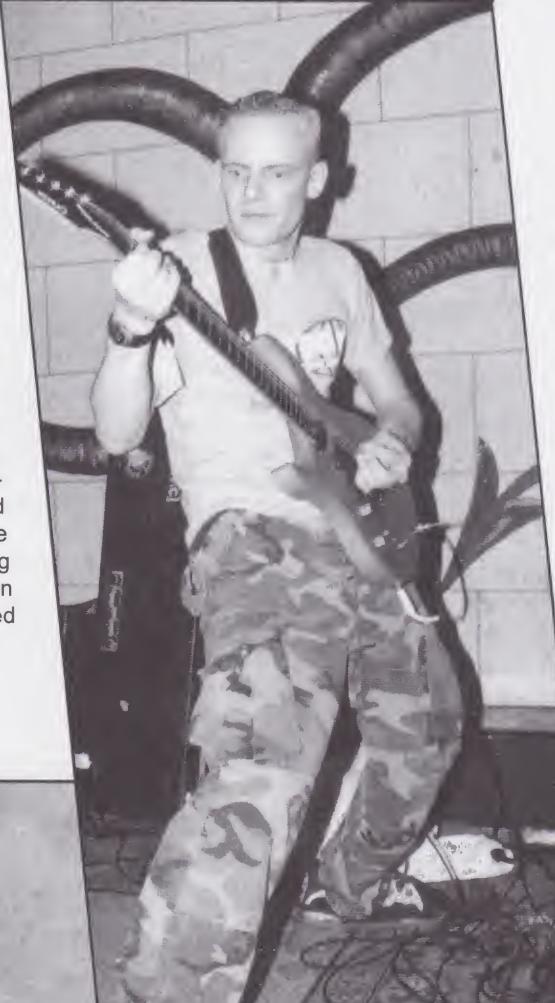
**Tell me about Poughkeepsie. Do you like it there? How was the move from Florida? Will you stay?**

No, I'll go back to Florida one day. I love it down there. South Florida is where I grew up and I love it all, it's the best. That is where I'll go when I meet a nice girl I want to spend my life with. Poughkeepsie is very nice, we moved there because we couldn't find a drummer in Florida.

**You couldn't find a drummer anywhere in Florida?**

Well, I'll be honest with you, we didn't look at hard as we could have. We are extremely lazy people and the entries we were getting were from people all over the world and not in Florida. The one guy we found that was really good enough to do it was from Poughkeepsie. When he asked us where we play and we said we mostly play in New York and New Jersey, he asked what the hell he was moving down to Florida for. When you consider that others in the band had moved from Holland or Oklahoma to be in the band it made sense to move again to Poughkeepsie. He turned out to be not the most, well, he had problems... let's just put it that way. We like it there. I think some people would prefer Florida in the band, but the Albany/Poughkeepsie scene is very good. I mean, I once saw a kid in Poughkeepsie wearing a Korn shirt, then the next time I saw him he was wearing a Hulud shirt, and then an E Town Concrete shirt. I don't know about other people but I think that's awesome. I want the kids who like Staind to like my band. I don't want to segregate bands. I want people who like us to like Staind as well. Having variety is very important. Up until I was 16 all I listened to was metal, and then around that time I heard hardcore and abandoned all my metal for hardcore and punk. I was very exclusive—I am a metalhead therefore I like metal, or I am a hardcore kid I only like hardcore—which is a goofy way to be, it's a very young way of thinking. Now that I'm older, I'm 28 years old, I can appreciate everyone from the Dead Milkmen to Hatebreed to Paul Simon, all of whom I love.

**Photos by Ross**





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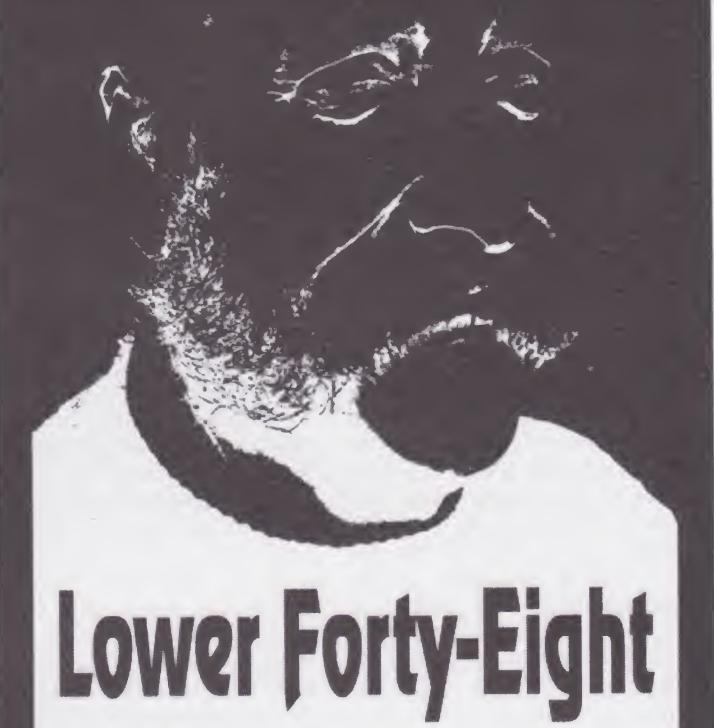
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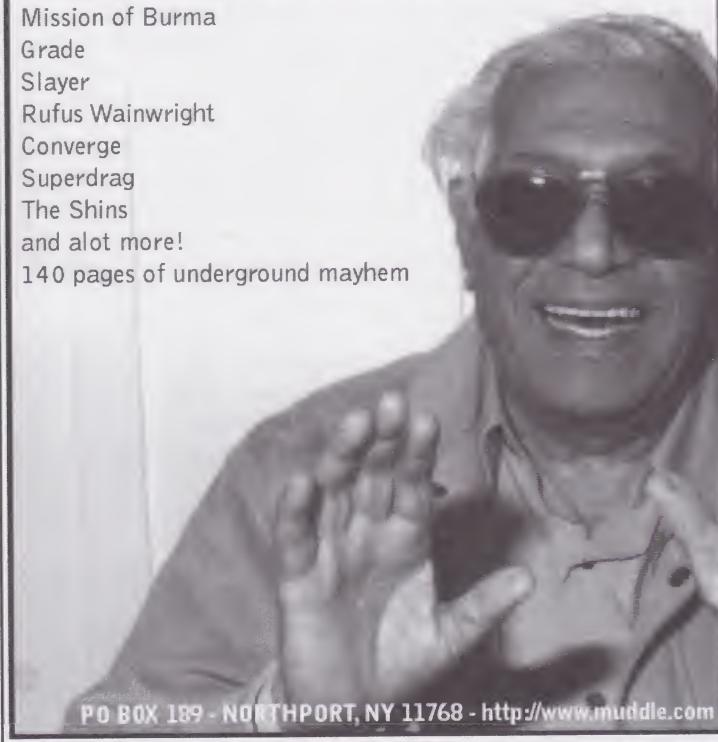
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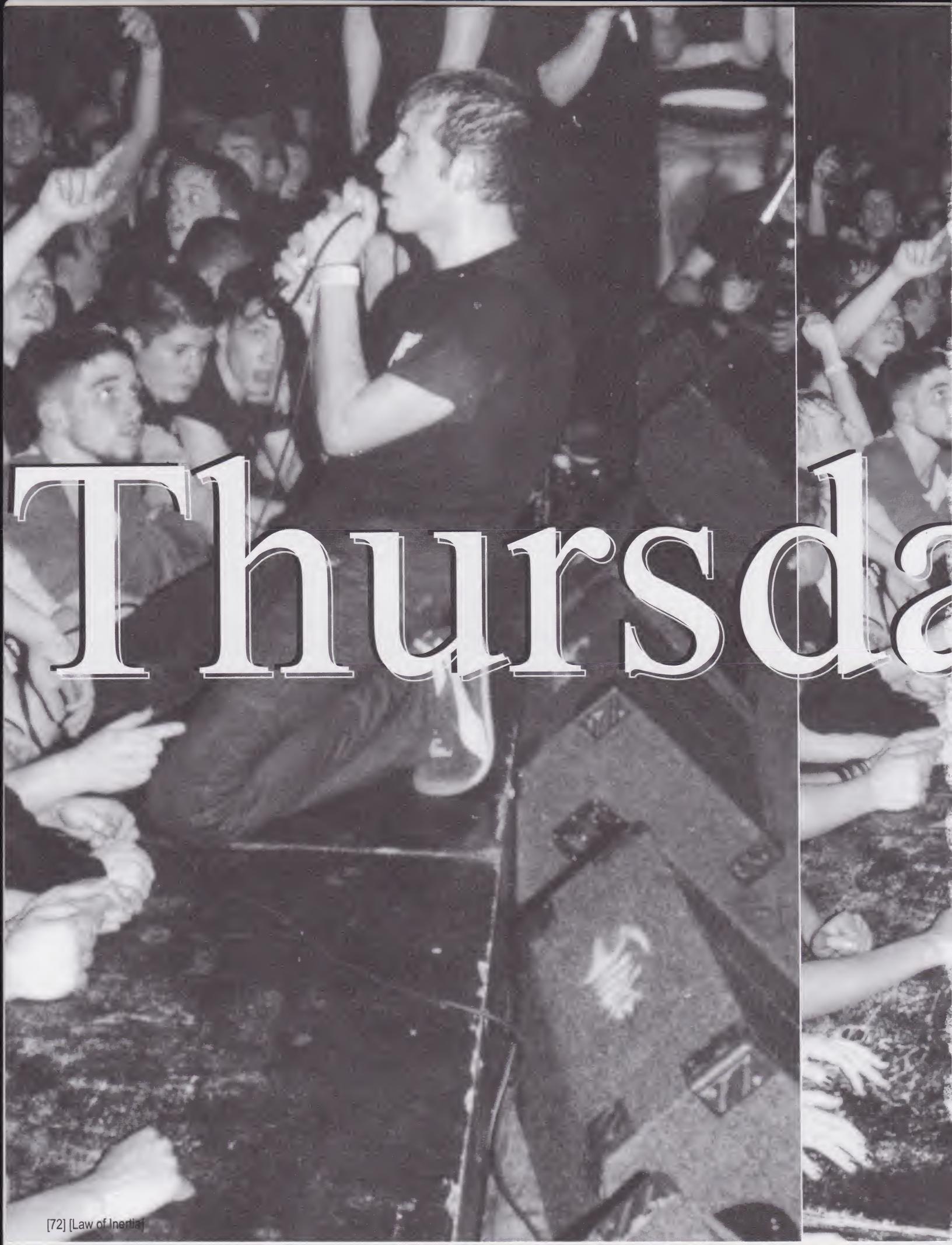
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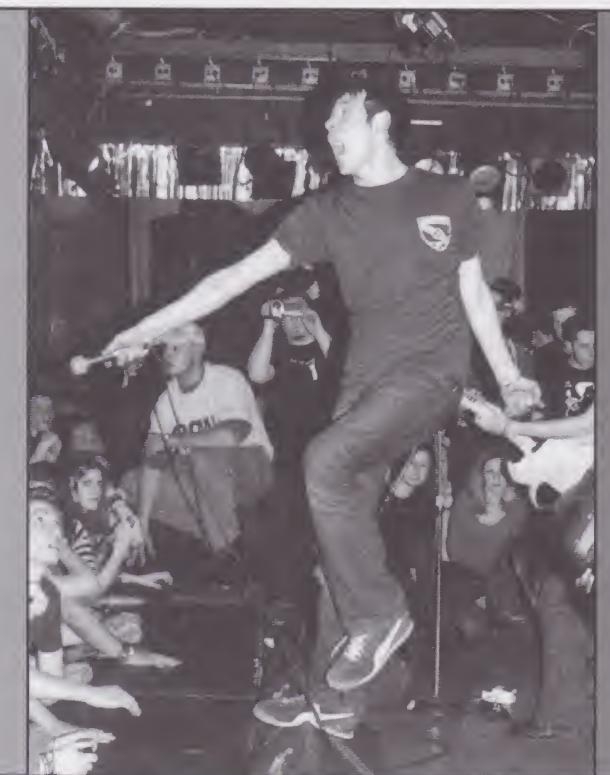




thursday

ay

Words and Photos by Ross Siegel



Thursday is a band that came out of nowhere to become one of the biggest outfits in indie rock. And to be perfectly honest, I didn't really even notice. I was sent their first record about two years ago and immediately thought the first two songs on it showed more promise than most any other new band I had heard in quite a while. The songs were passionate, thoughtful, and cathartic with the kind of sincerity most bands know little about. What was so amazing about that record was at the time virtually no one heard it, even though it was a very solid piece of work. Apparently someone did though since it found its way into the hands of the people at Victory Records who released the follow up record, *Full Collapse*, last year. I loved that record as well. It utilized a more layered, sophisticated sound and had more complex song arrangements that showed that this band was as capable as any in the hardcore/punk genre.

Still, I didn't notice when the punk masses began flocking to Thursday's shores. I rarely go to shows these days and Thursday doesn't play New York City very often so I had no chance to check them out live. I wrote the review of *Full Collapse* and moved onto other records that required my attention.

Then some time last June I got a call from Geoff, the band's mouthpiece. He left a message on my voice mail telling me he really liked my magazine and that he would appreciate it if I did an interview with his band. The thought had certainly crossed my mind to talk with Thursday but that kind of precociousness was humorous to say the least (and endearing). Nonetheless, I told Geoff I would be interested in doing one when they got back from tour. Almost a year later I finally had the chance to see the band in their home New Jersey headlining a sold out club with a 1000+ capacity. Unbeknownst to me the band's video for "Understanding in a Car Crash" had been making the rounds on MTV and had piqued the interest of a lot of kids around the nation-- many of whom were eagerly packed into that New Jersey hall. Clearly I wasn't the only one paying attention anymore.

Geoff greeted me very warmly and said he was very excited to be in my magazine. So we talked. And then Thursday

proceeded to rock the 1000+ kids into a frenzy. The band played so hard they looked as if they were going to faint amid the heat in the auditorium. Geoff, quite the showman, is as sincere and thoughtful as anyone you will meet in any band. He seems to take every compliment as if the giver is his only fan in the world. Plus he seems to be so touched by every single boy and girl that comes to his shows, as if the people watching are just as important as the bassist or drummer in Thursday... which is pretty amazing to watch if you want my opinion.

**Hi Geoff, thanks for coming.**

Thank you, I'm honored to be in *Law of Inertia*, you gave us our first favorable review ever so our band kind of thinks of you as a friend.

**Really? Wow, thanks! Anyways, how do you think the New Jersey scene has changed in the past few years and how have you changed with it?**

Well, when we started we were sort of on the lower levels of the New Brunswick scene. I met all the guys there and bands like Lifetime were huge at the time. Now there's really no scene in New Brunswick, or at least it's not what it used to be, and we're on the top of the heap now as opposed to being the band that played basements all over town. None of us can afford to live there anymore, which is why we're not as connected to New Brunswick anyway.

**Why is rent really expensive there?**

No, my rent was like four-hundred dollars a month but right now I can't afford rent at all.

**Victory isn't selling as many Hatebreed CDs as it used to? [laughter]**

My mom and dad are really cool. They want me to do what love, which is this band, so they're letting me live at home until things turn around. Now our goals are to keep doing what we've been doing and be able to tour everywhere and—

**Be able to pay the rent?**

That's sort of a goal but it's not that important. It's important from the point of view of I'm a person and I'd like to be able to support myself, but it's complicated because you don't want to think of your band as a cash machine, that's the harsh reality I guess.

You know, it's funny: the publicist at Victory told me that your video was the most played on M2 last month. I would have thought that a band that can do that would be making pretty good dough. Is that





## **"It's scary almost how content and blissful you are after seeing a show that really blows your mind. It truly is better than sex."**

**naive of me?**

You'd think, right? We got a call from Victory that we've sold more records than any band in Victory Records' history other than Hatebreed. I remember when I was a kid listening to Snapcase and I was sure those dudes were rolling in money and living the life. Or at least they were like, "cool, I've got some money, now I don't have to worry about a job." Now I realize they're probably like me and they didn't have shit. The hardest part about it is that I help run a small independent label and I've interned at other labels and I know that other people are making a lot of money off of us, so it's hard. You would kind of figure that if other people are making money off your band then you should be one of them. We haven't figured out how to make the financial situation work. It's also unfair when we see our friends on other labels who are living pretty well and selling less records than us. We're always going back and forth and trying not to think about it.

**You want to support yourself doing your music but is it worth it if you can't even afford to move out of your parents' house?**

It's hard. If we could it would be pretty amazing to do what we love and be able to have a car or an apartment, you know? What really gets me is that the smaller punk bands who don't tour nearly as much and can hold down jobs in addition to their music are usually the ones who preach about what is ethical and what isn't ethical to do in the music industry regarding money and music. Are they bitter? I'm not sure. I do know that we don't want to compromise our ideals just to make a buck. We don't want to have to write shitty music or sell our souls, so to speak, in order to live like rockstars. But, at the same time a fair salary wouldn't be all bad.

**There's a certain point where daylight shoots your dreams away.**

Right.

**You hear about the Strokes who are twenty years old and their parents are all really rich. It's not as tough to make an amazing record that everyone loves when you don't have to worry about where your food is coming from.**

You have to know something about good music to make a record that everyone loves, but what the fuck do you have to say that's interesting if your daddy handed your

amazing record deal to you on a silver platter? I think in some ways it's great that we're still struggling, though. Sometimes I think that if we were making good money I'd take all the money that I didn't need for the basics and put it away somewhere or give it to charity. I don't ever want to be comfortable while I'm making music.

**Why, do you think starving artists make better music?**

Not starving, but I don't ever want to be relaxed about my music. I don't want to be apathetic because apathy pretty much equals music that doesn't mean anything. It's like while I still have to worry about selling enough records to even get any money, I think it forces me to push myself and write the best damn music I can. The fact that I'm struggling makes my lyrics more insightful and my melodies more urgent. I do better work.

**I know exactly what you mean. I'm not exactly struggling financially but this magazine definitely takes a toll on my check book. People at punk shows see my zine and see that it's nice and thick and fancy and immediately assume that I must make a ton of money off of it. I make no money, every single issue except for one has lost money. So, since it's a labor of love—since I don't have to do it to pay the rent but rather because I want to do it—it forces me to make the best damn zine I know how.**

I see your zine at Tower and I assume it's a successful business. I'm surprised to hear it's not, actually. But you see what I mean. There are people who are probably making money off your zine even if you aren't. And people who probably should be making money who probably aren't, like the printers. The people who make our merch, Equal Vision, make a lot of money off of us. They're really nice and I love all the people who work there. In that case you can help and honest, blue-collar business. We don't send our stuff to Japan to get made but rather we're helping our friends. That's a good thing, I think.





**There are two things that happen: you either sell-out and move onto the next level or you quit. Do you worry about that?**

Oh totally, I totally see that. The Fugazis of the world are so few and so lucky. It's impossible to face that kind of situation. There's so much luck involved and so much good fortune. I would love that to be Thursday, but the path that we're already on is telling us that that we won't control our own destiny.

**Why do you say that?**

Well, we control it but we don't have complete freedom. We can make sure the things we hate don't happen but we can't decide small decisions ourselves. If we were still putting out our own records we wouldn't be playing shows like these and have our friends open up for us. I always say it's a give and take but I feel like we're able to give a lot more in where we made compromises. There's so much elitism in the scene so people don't see it as that. They see it as us shooting ourselves in the foot and selling-out. If we're a band that five kids stay with throughout our careers because they fucking care more about our music than scene politics then at least five kids will stop being holier than thou.

It just seems to me where there's a point where you say, "I've been at this level for three years without getting bigger and I don't want to live with my parents anymore." Do you give up your music or do you give up living in your parents' house? We've been presented with options and we've made decisions that we feel are proof that we haven't sold out. But if most people knew about them then they would label us sell-outs for even being in that situation. Honestly, if we can do what we think is honest, if some people berate it then I'm fine with that.

But what differentiates you guys from the punk bands like Midtown or A New Found Glory is that there isn't a radio hit on either of your records. I love your music but none of your stuff is marketable. It's really interesting to me that you've gotten as big as you have since you're not as hard as Limp Bizkit—or as mindless—and not as catchy as Matchbox 20.

I think we're not the type of band that people are going to hum to themselves when they're nostalgic for 2002. But when they go to their bedrooms at night they'll throw us on ten years from now. There was a time when the biggest bands weren't catchy. The Clash never had a radio hit and the majority of their stuff isn't as catchy as Michael Jackson or George Michael, but they're in the history books.

Plus, I'm sure they had their moments where people called them sell-outs because they were really big. I feel that kids in the underground want to have some bands that are big without selling

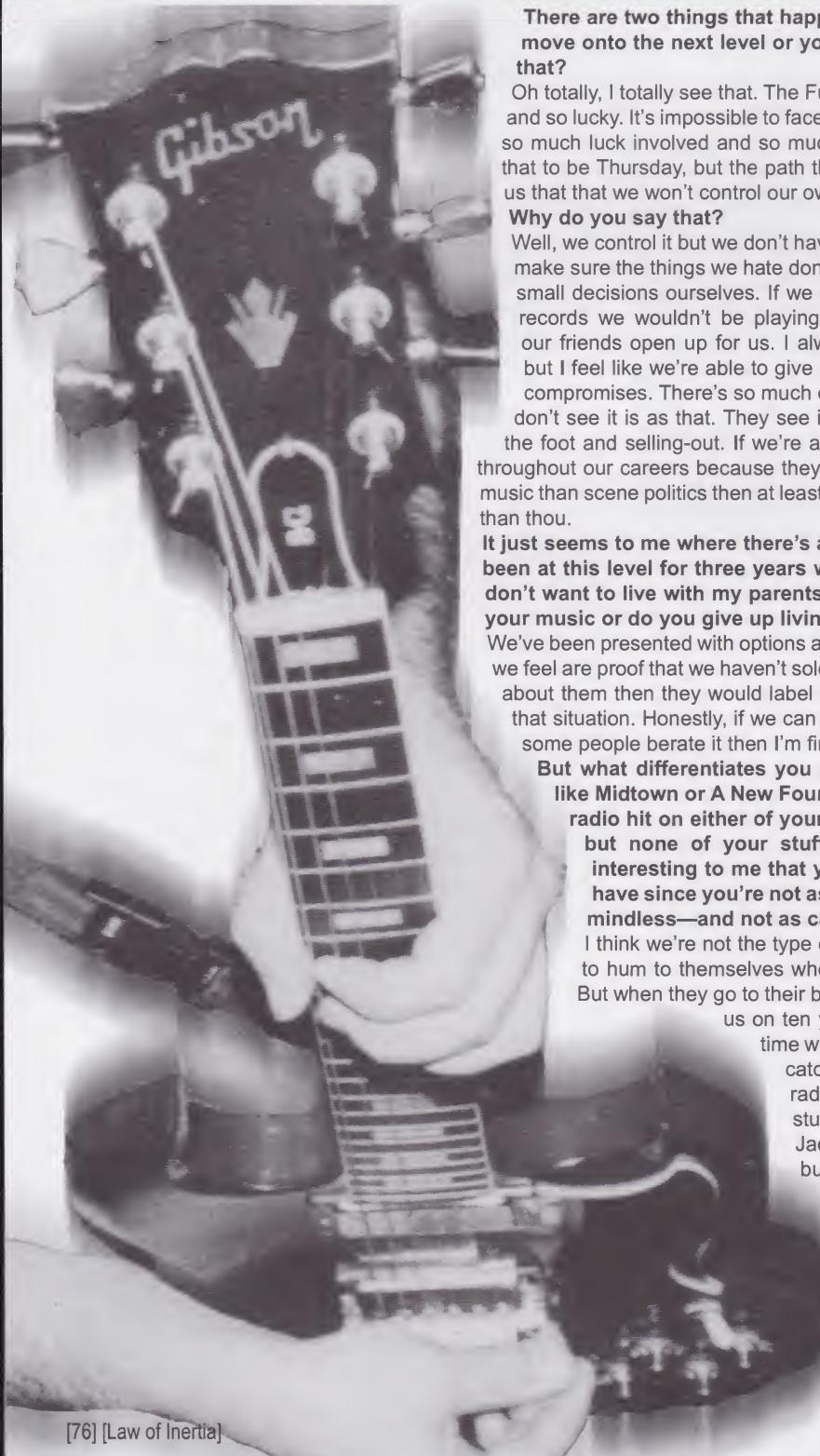
out. Like playing the same music they always played just on MTV instead of in basement to fifteen kids. If we're part of that I don't know, but I definitely think there's a void. I think it's amazing that At the Drive-in put out a major label record and no one called them sell-outs. It's because they fucking rocked!

I don't know why no one mentions this at all, but what about in 1994 when every other band out there was a sell-out that signed to a major. In 1994 the punk community totally wrote off Green Day, Rancid, The Offspring, Bad Religion, etc. for becoming huge when a few months before their MTV debuts they were all very very respected bands. Now every band in the underground that signs crosses over with no problems and no criticism from the underground kids. I'm not saying we have to be pissed at bands like you, but what happened in the cultural landscape since then that caused the shift?

I don't think there has been a Green Day yet. There haven't been any huge punk bands as of late—and Blink 182 totally isn't in the punk category if you ask me. Even up to a gold record a band can still generally get away with it. All those bands avoid a backlash, but one band gets huge and sell five million records and every stupid suburban kid that has their record but has no idea about the scene the band came from or the ethics therein. I think once that happens then the backlash will come as well.

**What did you think about the whole Green Day thing in 1994? I mean, the punk kids hated them to the point that nowadays that band isn't even put in the same sentence as punk anymore.**

I thought that record, *Dookie*, was really good. It sounded just like their earlier stuff and it might have been even better. I thought





**"I don't ever want to be comfortable while I'm making music.... I don't want to be apathetic because apathy pretty much equals music that doesn't mean anything."**

their singer had a really good voice, but after hearing their songs every two minutes it old really fast. That song "Longview" was the worst song on the record too.

**I completely agree. Do punk rock ethics mean anything to you, Geoff?**  
They do but I think people's perceptions of "if a band's getting bigger then they must be sell-outs" is stupid. I think bands should just do anything they get offered because it's a means to a quick end. I mean, in the long run that will kill your band because I believe that fans take note and offense to the Sprite commercial you do and the bad movie your song appears in. This is kind of a touchy subject, and I haven't told this to anyone else so print this with discretion, but Pink offered us a tour.

**Pink?**

Uh huh. [laughter]

**You mean like the Britney Spears wanna-be?**

The same. It would have been 2,500 capacity every night, we would be getting paid about \$5000 a night as well. We'd be playing to people who had certainly never even seen us before and probably wouldn't even care either. We know that there's going to be lot of kids who like us and hate us, but there's no sense making it worse and going on tour with Pink! [much laughter] It would be like when Murphy's Law went on tour with Madonna.

**Or when Grandmaster Flash opened for the Clash.**

And the Clash fans hated that rap shit! I always thought it was awesome though, the Clash have some guts in them. Sometimes we say, "let's make all the enemies we're ever going to make right now in one fell swoop." Then we realized that the tour was being done by SFX Clear Channel who are a radio monopoly—they own over a thousand commercial radio stations and literally determine what gets played on the radio and what does not. So, after I found out they were involved that's when the idea of doing the Pink tour was scrapped entirely.

**You know what that means for you now?**

That we are never ever getting airplay on commercial radio, I know. We turned down the tour and the truth is I don't really know that much about the company and we felt that we didn't want to dive into anything with our eyes closed, and that's not punk to me. Just because we get five thousand bucks a night isn't worth stepping without looking.

**Yeah, a band like Blink 182—that was an indie band at one point—could give a shit about that thing I think.**

And now that I think about it they're probably about as big as Green Day and you don't see a backlash there. Even kids who hate Blink 182 don't call them sell-outs.

**Well that may be because Green Day were a very respected band whereas no one intelligent ever took Blink seriously.**

I have a weird view of punk. When I thought about punk as a little kid I

thought it was an abandonment of everything... which isn't what it is at all. And then I thought hardcore was the antithesis of punk and it was about not giving a shit about punk ideals which is even more wrong than the first supposition. I still feel really strange about straight-up punk bands who are fast and full of humorous lyrics, like NOFX for instance. Then you have a band like Propagandhi who totally change the face of that style of punk and what it means to play fast and competently. It's far more subversive to see NOFX and Propagandhi on the same stage or in the same genre then people realize. NOFX can be very very political and have remained staunchly independent in ways that Propagandhi will never really have to deal with. I always wonder since I've never met Fat Mike if it's because he wants to remain in control—

**Or if the reality is that even without a major label deal his house in San Francisco is still a mansion, which it is.**

You can never tell if it's the desire to be the man or just if he's still doing well.

I read an interview with Tim from Rancid where he said that he had never had money in his life so when he finally had some money after his band broke he didn't know what do with it. So instead of buying an enormous house he went and bought a walkman. That was really as high as his monetary aspirations could be at that point.

Wow!

**What do you do in that situation? One day you're dirt poor and the next day you have a million bucks. Geoff, if after you finally can afford to move out of your parents' would you develop a cocaine habit the size of Utah or something?**

Well, of course, right after I got off heroin. [laughter]

**What happens if you're the band that every single minute is played on the radio?**

It's funny because I still don't fully comprehend how big we could get. I wouldn't buy a yacht, I'd save my money and go back to school. But, if I ever had more money then I knew what do with I would give it to a crisis outreach center my friend works with. There's no point in worrying about what to do with all the money coming out of your sleeves. I would never want a decadent house—even though sometimes I see that show on MTV, Cribs, and I think the houses are awesome. Ross, we're very good friends with the guys in Midtown and they are so amazing. Their band is so good that it's almost a crime that they're not in every single mall in America. It almost doesn't make sense for them to not be huge... their music is supposed to be huge.

**That's the same way I feel about Shai Hulud.**

There's a certain apocalyptic quality to seeing your favorite band live. You could die after seeing Fugazi live even once.

**Totally!**

It's scary almost how content and blissful you are after seeing a show that really blows your mind. It truly is better than sex. If I make one or two kids feel the same way I do at a Fugazi show when they come to Thursday shows, then I know it sounds cheesy and cliché, but that is totally worth it because that is a feeling that money truly cannot buy.

**Photos by Ross**

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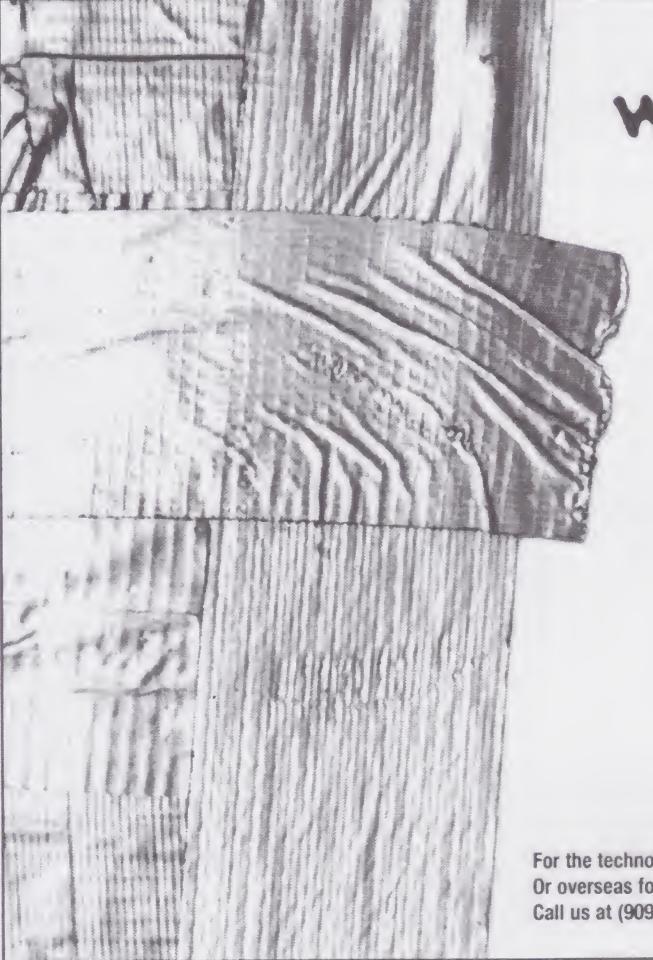


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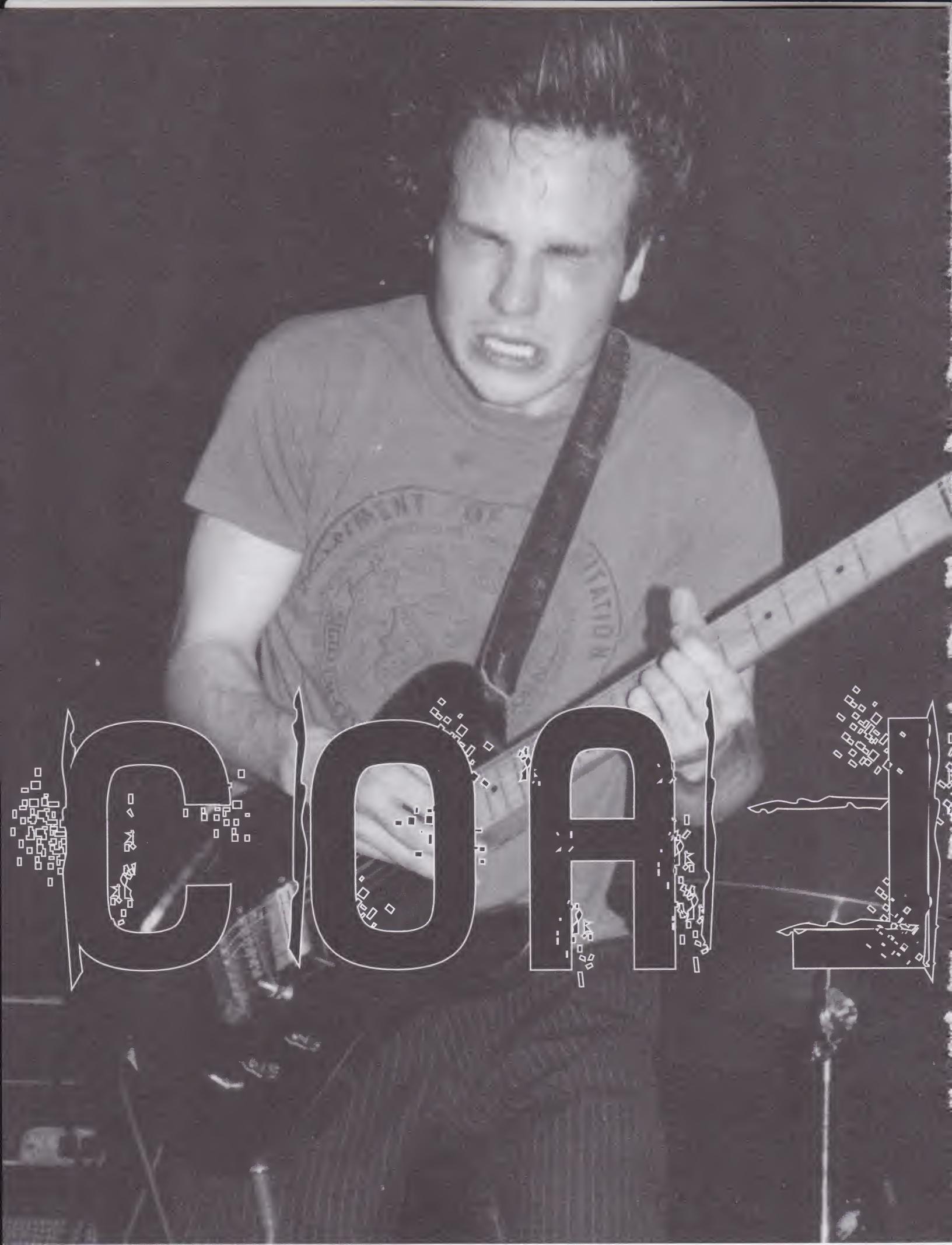
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COOL

**BYE  
FOLI**

Words and Photos by Ross



I've met a lot of people who play music since I started *Law of Inertia*. I can honestly say that most of them don't remember me the next time they see me, which may be as short as a month later. I don't hold it against them, I don't consider them rock star assholes or what have you. I'm the same way, I meet lots of people and rarely remember them right away the next time I see them. That is why I was very surprised when I approached the doors to the North Six club in Brooklyn to find the members of the great Rye Coalition unloading their van while their guitarist Jon said, "hey Ross, how you been?" It took me a few seconds to remember that he was the band's lead guitarist and that I had met him around four years prior (and hadn't seen him since) when he dated a friend of mine. Impressed I walked up and he told me he didn't realize that I was the guy who ran *Law of Inertia*.

We chatted and eventually he led me to a small room in the basement of the club where the rest of the band was holed up waiting for a mildly-talented, but good looking female rock band to finish their set. I had a chance to talk with Jon and Ralph about where their band is going. Specifically, I was interested in whether or not Rye Coalition was ever going to make good on my hopes that their fanbase would be as big as they most definitely deserved. They were nice guys—very laid back and sharp—and anyone who observes how the two interact will instantly understand that the two are very very close and know each other very well.

Finally, we went up stairs as the good looking girls finished their uninspired set and the trendy Brooklyn crowd thinned out substantially. The thirty or forty people left in the room were treated to a show by a band that plays as if they are never ever going to have access to music again in their lives. It doesn't take a genius to see that the members of Rye Coalition love music more than anything—as if it's the only thing they have in the world. Jon plays as if his head is on fire, Ralph sings with more style and charisma than any singer in punk rock, and the rest of the band grooves and shimmies like they're standing on hot coals. All those other rock and roll bands are a sham. That so-called rock revival that is going on now (that the female band before Rye took the stage have certainly bought into) is comprised of wanna-bes and style-whores. Rye Coalition are the real deal.

I wrote a review of your second record and in it I think I said something like, "Rye Coalition is the quintessential band for having sex to." What do you think about that description?

Jon: Wow, that's quite a compliment.

Ralph: I kind of like that. That's really good.

Jon: I always thought the Melvins were more quintessential, but if it's us then cool.

You think the Melvins are sex music?

Jon: Aw yeah, we once saw some guy fuck his girlfriend to the Melvins!

Ralph: Where was that? Oh yeah, Cupertino, CA.

You saw a guy... what?

Jon: We were looking through a window as this huge dude fucked his girlfriend. What album was it to? Ozma or Bullhead I think.

Are you guys big Melvins fans?

Jon: I was, I love them!

Some bands would probably get insulted to have their music called sex music. You guys are into that anyway?

Ralph: See, I don't know, I always thought that Girls Against Boys was sexy. Not in the sense that you want to have sex to it, but instead they always seemed to have a "we're sexy!" thing going on.

Jon: There's a difference between "we're sexy" and actual legitimate sex music.

So are you guys not sexy then?

Jon: No, I think it is safe to say that we are not sexy dudes.

So what makes a band sexy?

Ralph: Sex appeal of course. I mean, when a band—take us for instance—is up on stage they have to be rock gods in order to pull the crowd in. We have our rock god moments.

How do you pull the crowd in?

Ralph: Hold them tight, get deep inside their psyches. You fuck them PT Barnum style is what you do! Bam!

This is turning out to be one of the stranger interviews I've ever done.

Jon: Would Elliott Smith have given you the same answer?

Probably very similar. [laughter, see *Law of Inertia* issue #4... if you can find it. edit] What music did you lose your virginity to and in retrospect what music would you like to have lost your virginity to?

Jon: I lost my virginity to no music. It was in a backyard.

Sounds romantic.

Jon: Nope not at all. [laughter] It was just a random girl, in a random back yard—it wasn't her back yard it wasn't my back yard—we were just walking down the street and we went into a backyard. There was no music but there were lots of crickets. We



did it on the concrete. The only music were the crickets and the fucking screech of my sneakers after I nutted.

**In retrospect what band would you have liked to lose your virginity to?**

**Ralph:** I know mine already. Led Zeppelin, "Custard Pie" or "Hats off to Roy Harver."

**Jon:** Ideally mine would have been King Crimson.

**Ralph:** Nice!

**The thing is, the girl probably wouldn't have been turned on by King Crimson.**

**Jon:** No probably not. Maybe Michael Jackson's *Off the Wall*.

**I lost my virginity to Bela Fleck and the Flecktones.**

**Ralph:** Wow, shit! That's incredible. [laughter]

**So, how long have you two known each other?**

**Jon:** A really long time. We grew up together. I grew up with all these guys. We're like the two brothers in the Black Crowes who punch each other on stage. We've definitely had our spats and taken them out in the middle of a show for the whole world to see. Ralph punched me as a warning on stage recently. [laughter] I once knifed Ralph because we were playing tennis and I broke his watch. Then we went back to my house and he locked me out but I got back in and cut him with a knife.

**Is Jon psycho?**

**Ralph:** Yeah, but he would say the same about me.

**Jon, you were a teacher until recently, right? [nods] Finish this sentence: if Jon were my teacher I'd....**

**Ralph:** Cheat on all his tests, that's for sure.

**Jon:** If Ralph were my teacher I'd punch his face after school. If Ralph were my shrink would be a more interesting question.

**Finish that sentence.**

**Jon:** If Ralph were my shrink I'd have to be an animal I think. [laughter] Our friendship goes so far back that we transcend the human/animal interaction. We are so close that we are primally connected.

**Here's a serious question: every time I think Rye Coalition is going to become huge you drop off the face of the map and I don't hear about you for another three years.**

**Ralph:** A lot of people have said that in the past. The reason for us not being as serious as we should is because we're always in separate places, like school in Ohio, and then we are only a band for three or four months a year tops. This is the first time we've actually decided to do this band full time and make it a real thing instead of just a part-time hobby that we do on vacations from work or school. Instead of recording, playing a few gigs, then going AWOL for another two years we're going to make this our lives and see if we can be rock gods for a change of pace.

**Is it going to work, or are you going to implode?**

**Ralph:** No, no more fistfights on stage. That was at the end of a tour and we're all friends again.

**Jon:** Rye Coalition is like a family more than most bands. When some bands talk about how their band mates are their best friends, well not only are these guys truly my best friends but I've known them so long they're like one step away from family. A dysfunctional family at that, but family still. We know we're not going to break up because that would pretty much mean we don't want to be friends anymore. So we just work out the issues we've had since we were eight years old every time they come around. It takes us a really long time to write songs because we all work best by ourselves, which is odd. But this last record was our most collaborative, which is probably result of us all being in Jersey together for more than a month for the first time in years. We took ideas and all worked with them. I don't think we ever would have lasted if one of us dominated in terms of the song-writing process. Since we all have input it lets us each put our own stamp on the songs.

**Do you think your sound has progressed since your first record?**

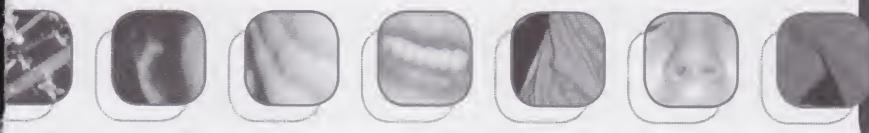
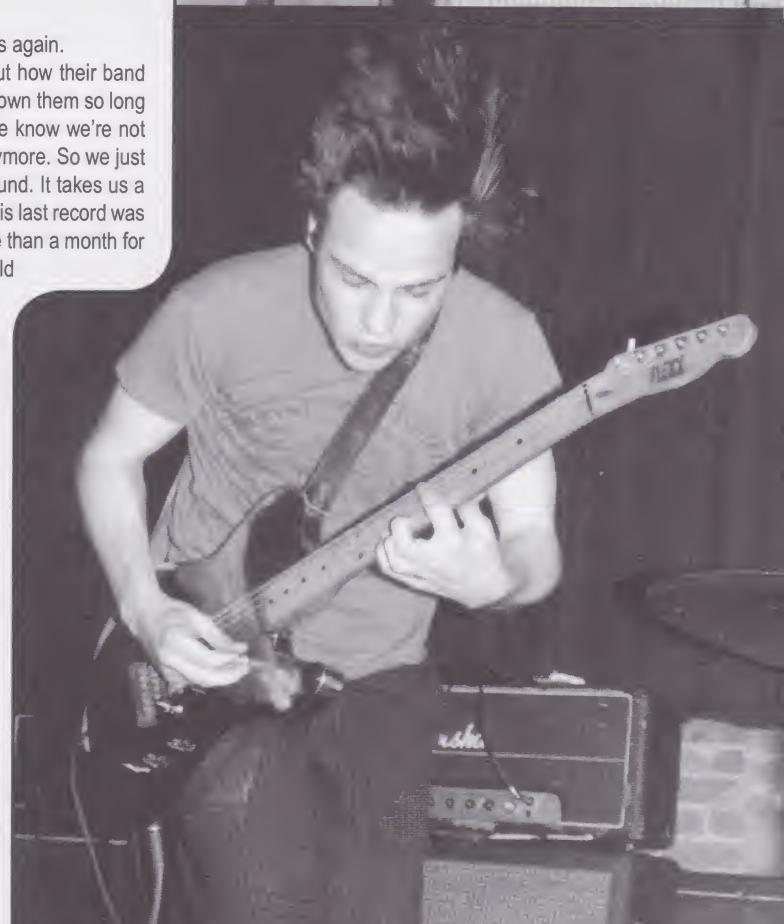
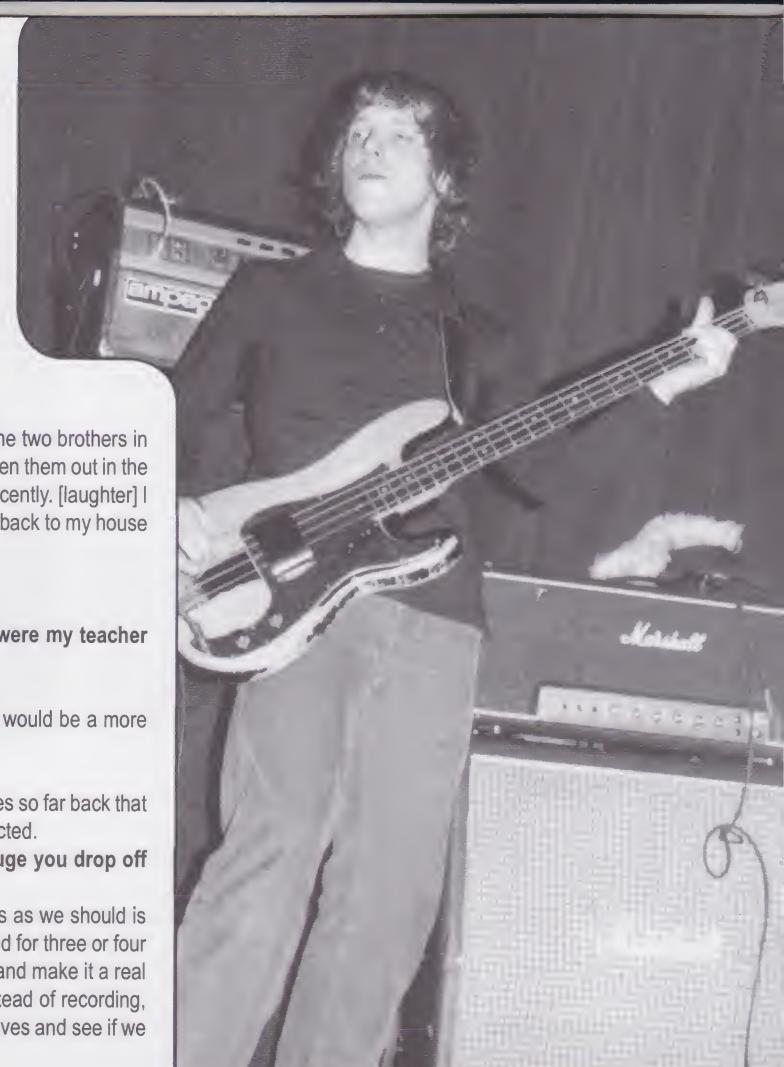
**Jon:** Progressed or matured? I just think it's changed. I think the new record is the best stuff we've done. The goal of our band is to keep getting better musically. We want to become better writers as well as musicians. So, maybe it's the same band and same sound as when we started out but I honestly think we sound nothing alike from our first seven-inch. I put on the new *Promise Ring* record and it fucking sounds exactly the same to me as their early stuff.... which is obviously great. [much laughter]

**Ralph:** I think we've gotten better at just playing together. We're more comfortable going out on a limb live and in our practice room with each other than we used to be.

**Jon:** We know each other better musically than we did seven and a half years ago when we started out. Now we know to leave room in a song for Ralph to really go crazy on the vocals and add his own part. We've gotten to be a slower band as well than when we started.

**Really? I think your stuff now is faster than when you started.**

**Jon:** We try to keep a good mix of styles, moods, and tempos. On the new record we definitely have the fast stuff to dance to and we have the long, slow blues-based songs too. We don't want to be one of those bands that matures by getting less nasty. We play what we like and we write how we're feeling at that moment. You've seen us out there on stage before, we go crazy if the song is eighty beats a minute or a hundred and forty. It's best to keep it mixed and have a lot of different styles for songs. I hate it personally how so many bands get more tame as they go on and get slower as they



mature.

**You guys honestly seem to be getting more belligerent as you go on.**

**Ralph:** I think it's a more streamlined belligerence, a more crafted and focused nihilism, which is exactly what I love about our music. At the beginning it was like a cluster-fuck—we just went out and played everything we could throw into a song just to do it.

**Jon:** I don't even remember how those early songs came together to tell the truth. We were just so fucking excited to be out there and playing shows and writing songs that we didn't give the music and the textures as much thought and consideration as we do now. When we first started I don't remember the process at all probably because there was no process. Believe it or not we refine our songs a lot now.

**Ralph:** We're not just aggression aggression aggression in your face now. We're more directed in what we want to get across with the band and how we want each song to contribute to that. Not in a premeditated way, but we've learned to let each other breathe. We know each other's strengths and weaknesses and what we each like to do better than we did when we began.

**Jon:** Back in the old days we were in a rush to just make songs, now as cheesy as it sounds we're trying to make moods. You could argue that the mood we actually create isn't that different from one another but in a subtle way the songs now are very very different from one another in terms of what they get across.

**Ralph:** I think it also has to do with how we function as a band. Before there would be such an urgency to write songs 'cause we had not much time. Now we play together all the time and we'll just jam on one or two parts over and over and over trying to get what we want out of it.

**Jon:** The last song on *On Top* took us forever to write just because we couldn't get it right. We've had it for a long time and we just kept re-working it until it finally made sense. Before it was a string of parts that we juxtaposed together and then it was a cohesive whole.

**You guys were known as those misfit hardcore kids from the mid-'90s super political Jersey scene who would sit off in the corner drinking and smoking while straight-edge was all the rage. It was sort of like thumbing your nose at convention and expectations. Has that sort of vibe changed at all and has it affected the band at all?**

**Jon:** I think it affects the music. A lot of people have been asking us about that recently. The thing is when we started out those were the shows we had access to, that was the punk scene in Jersey. We never had any other options. We never really felt part of the "scene." We just did what we weren't supposed to do because we wanted to. It made us like lepers in that era—we were outcasts, literally. It made us stronger and we were like, "well, fuck you." We're going to sound how we want whether we're opening for a political band or if we're headlining. We've never had an agenda. We totally don't care about what the scene thinks or what anyone thinks. We do this for us.

**Ralph:** We never did this band to sell records or get girls. We did this band because it was fucking fun and it felt right. To some degree I think we've fought a lot of that convention, we still get a lot of criticism for doing what we want to do and sometimes being a bit brash about it.

**A lot of bands will tell you they don't care what people think and most of the time you take it with a grain of salt the size of Mexico. When I listen to your music you can tell that you're not playing music to win a popularity contest.**

**Jon:** What's ten feet long and has no pubic hair? The front row of a Promise Ring show. [laughter] Our shows may not be packed but we're never going to be accused of giving into the hip trend or courting the sixteen year old mall girls of middle America.

**Ralph:** Jon, people at our shows have pubic hair but there's only ten people, so there. [laughter] Seriously, image means nothing to us. We've never been cool in the traditional sense. If we get up there on stage and more than two of us are in fashion or have our hair combed then it's a total fluke or 'cause our girlfriends did something to us or something. I think fashion is a huge part of punk and people tend to forget or ignore that. For us, we're sort of making an implicit "fuck you" to that, not because we are morally against fashion but rather just because it doesn't occur to us to wear tight jeans and lots of leather.

**I think you guys are amazing but you're definitely not the slickest**





**guys in the world.**

**Ralph:** I almost want to zip my lip so I don't say something that will get me in trouble but there are so many great bands that didn't give a shit about that stuff. They worried about the musical quality and the anger and frustration of what they played rather than their hair. I'm not comparing us to them but look at Nirvana. They totally didn't care about that stuff—look at them, they generally looked like shit—but that's why they are going to be remembered by every kid in America and while Third Eye Blind will be a glint in everyone's collective eye. They were awesome! Or Fugazi or Shellac, they don't give a shit either! Is that why you come see a band? Because they're pretty? That's not why I go see a show. If a band is making good music then who cares, but when it comes down to it we would rather worry about playing our fucking hearts out and puking 'cause we played so hard even if our hair looks bad.

**Jon:** Nation of Ulysses were the best band as far as bridging that gap. Their music rocked and made you want to light your shoes on fire but those guys had style, those guys were rock gods.

**I think a lot of people would say you're taking up where Nation of Ulysses left off.**

**Jon:** Now they're more into saying we sound like AC/DC or Led Zeppelin meets Fugazi, which is a fucking lazy description of our music. People who say we sound like Zeppelin meets Fugazi, which says to me that a lot of people these days are too lazy to think up something more descriptive and more interesting.

**I love AC/DC but I don't think you sound anything like them at all.**

**Jon:** Neither do I.

**Ralph:** Maybe earlier stuff.

**Jon:** And we still get Fugazi comparisons which just baffles me.

**How would you describe yourselves to an ex-punk rocker who has dropped out of the scene?**

**Jon:** That's a tough question because generally if you're comparing something that is dissonant and aggressive for someone who has a basic punk background then you go straight for Fugazi, so maybe those people just don't know enough about punk to make a better comparison than Fugazi. I might say we sound like Jesus Lizard out of pure laziness. It's not that I don't care but that's your job to describe it. It's your job to think up how to sum up my music in words and it's my job to make your life difficult. Writing about music is fucking hard, though. It's not an easy thing to do, but it's definitely not for the lazy and not for people whose most extensive music knowledge is limited to Zeppelin.

**It's a cop-out to say it sounds like AC/DC just because there are blaring guitars and rock and roll attitude.**

**Jon:** I think so too. But Black Sabbath and the '70s are cool again and so is AC/DC. **Sure, rock and roll is back but you've been playing rock for almost eight years. Do you feel slighted?**

**Ralph:** No, I don't feel slighted. I think there are a ton of bands popping up right now that have set out with the intention of emulating '70s or '80s music. If people want to call us AC/DC clones, or as some retard put it: "the second coming of Led Zeppelin," then they're welcome to be mediocre. It's not important for us, we didn't start the band to emulate anyone. We started the band because we were bored and we wanted to express ourselves and contribute something. Sure we have influences but we listen to the Melvins, Zeppelin, and Slayer all in one day.

**What, if anything, is sacred to Rye Coalition?**

**Jon:** I would say creativity is holy to us. Fun, musicianship, friendship.

**Ralph:** One thing that is sacred to me when I think about this band is playing music with the four people I love. It's us five against the world. If people love us or hate us they're not there in the studio, they're not there when we write the songs, or when we drive hours to get to a show in Texas.

**Jon:** They're not there when we play to two people in Des Moines, but we are—all five of us, together—and that is sacred.

**Ralph:** There are a ton of issues that are important to us—what's going on in the world that's bad, oppression, etc.—but Rye Coalition is our vehicle to make good music not right the wrongs of the world. If we can have a good time with people for five, ten, fifteen minutes then we are happy and we've done a good thing. In other words, no one wants to have sex to Rage Against the Machine. [laughter]



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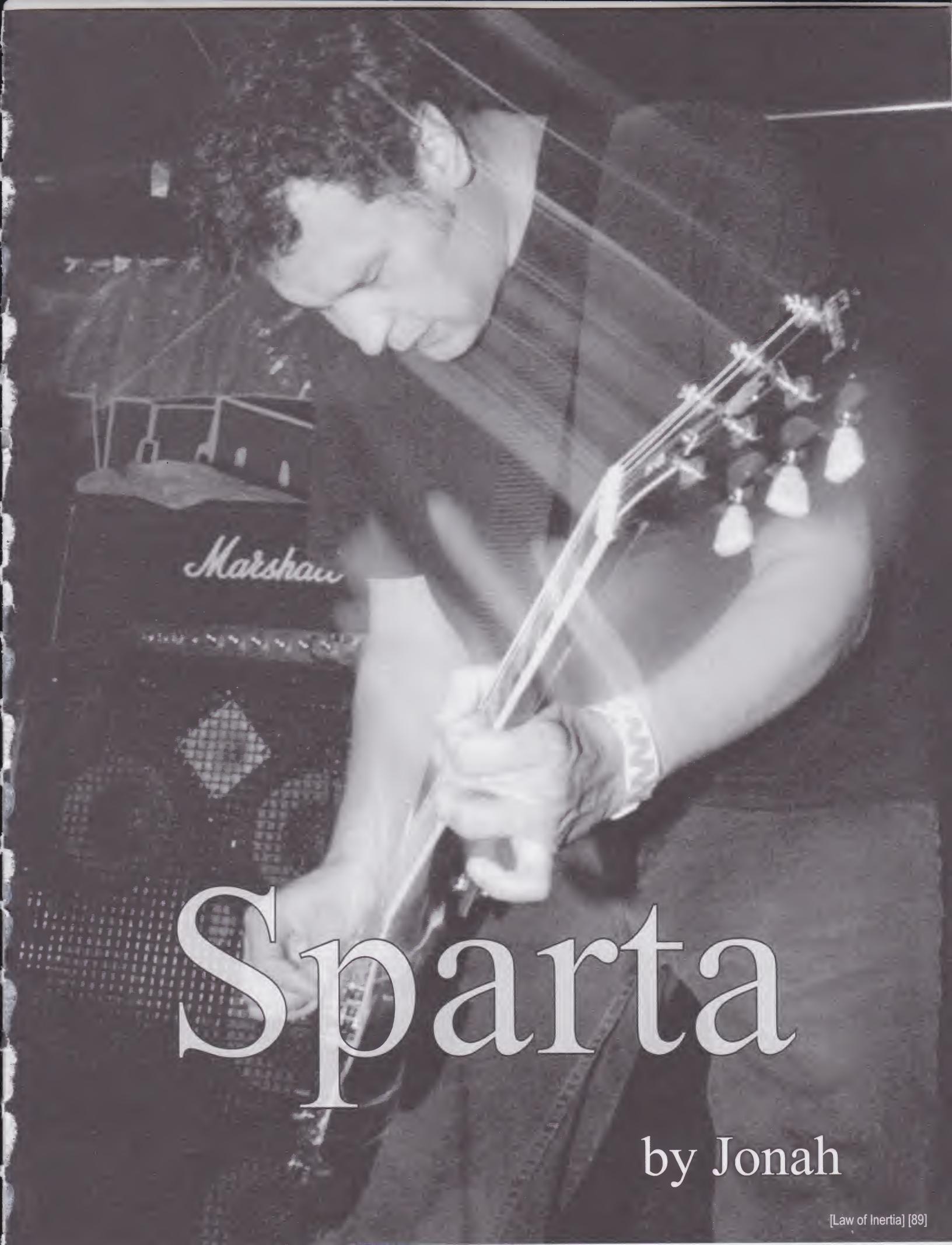
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# Sparta

by Jonah

*The hiatus is history. This piece is about Sparta, not At The Drive-In. However, it's impossible to ignore the fact that 3/5 of Sparta's members are on the rebound from who I consider to be the best band to come along in the last five years and, sadly, the band who could have washed the machismo makeup off the face of mainstream music. Let's just be thankful we have Sparta to carry their torch. While the afro-ed pair of Cedric Bixler and Omar Rodriguez were the most visual aspects of ATDI (and therefore garnered the most attention), the rest of the band – guitarist Jim Ward (who doubles as singer for Sparta), drummer Tony Hajjar, and bassist Paul Hinojos – were the group's driving force. And that's the reason why Sparta's music isn't a sizable departure from the ground these lads forged in their previous act. While Bixler and Rodriguez are exploring dub with their side-project Defacto, Ward admitted to me, "It does sound like stuff that was in the last band because it's three of the writers. I think for us to really do something completely totally different... I don't think I could do it." However, that doesn't mean that the songs on the *Austere* EP are Relationship of Command B-sides. The fact that Sparta doesn't have every magazine hailing them as the saviors of rock n' roll has given them the freedom to relax and experiment with un-indie rock concepts like re-mixes and laptop electronica excursions. When I talked to Ward via telephone during a break from recording their upcoming full-length for Dreamworks records, I was taken aback with how down-to-earth and likable he was. Mainly because every time I saw ATDI live, he usually spent a majority of the set yelling at the crowd and threatening to walk off the stage. It's clear that Ward is focused and excited about launching Sparta, but at the same time he showing remorse for ATDI's break-up and acknowledging his previous successes. Sparta may be a new band, but they're not starting again from scratch – these three Texas hellraisers have been proving themselves for the last seven years and their latest vehicle is just the next chapter in a career that's growing brighter by the moment – let's just hope the momentum doesn't tear them apart.*

#### Jim, how's the recording going so far?

It's going really good. All the drums are all done and most of the guitars are done. Sometimes when you're recording, you record one instrument and then when another instrument comes on you find a mistake with the combination of both. So we're using today as a day to kind of patch up all the little things here and there.

#### How does it compare to Ross Robinson approach?

It's really different. It's really mellow.

#### So would you say it's less intense recording experience overall?

I think musically, note-for-note, it's probably more intense. Ross has a certain style and it's not that way. But musically, I will say it's more intensive – I mean theory wise and stuff. Like really getting into how chords fit together and things... probably things that no one will ever fucking notice (laughter).

#### There are elements of Sparta that sound very similar to At The Drive-In. Do you view your new band as a continuation of ATDI or something completely different?

Well, I was just telling the guy who's doing our record last night, "I don't think I'll ever be good enough to make fake music." I'll never be able to say, "Well, I don't want to be in a band that sounds like this anymore." It's sort of like when a band breaks up you get this whole new lease on life and you can do anything you want to do. I could have actually really started my country band or something, you know? The thing is, what I write is what I write, and I think all of us feel the same way.

It does sound like stuff that was in the last band because it's three of the writers. I think for us to really do something completely totally different... I don't think I could do it.

#### Alternately, De Facto [Omar and Cedric's other band] is completely different from ATDI.

Of course you push yourself to grow, and I think this record will be a growth from stuff I've done in the past.

But I'm never gonna get bummed out if people say it sounds like At The Drive-In. I spent six and a half years in that band; I started that band when I was 17; a quarter of my life was in that band. It's just like graduating onto a different thing.

#### Did you ever think about taking a break from music after the breakup?

I had like the full-on freakout phase which I think is pretty natural,

#### What did you do?

Well, the thing is I had just gotten married.

#### Oh yeah?

Yeah. I got married and the band stopped pretty quickly (laughter). I was a little freaked out because I thought, "Fuck, I have somebody to take care of now." I had a little freakout phase where I thought maybe I should go to college or maybe I should, you know, do something a little more practical where I'm home more. But the thing is, I married someone who's been with me through all the touring and didn't want me home all the time (laughter). She was like, "you gotta have another band." And then Paul and Tony called me and said that we should play again, so they talked me into it. I really didn't think I would do anything anymore, actually.

#### Did you know that the two camps were going to break the way they did?

No, I didn't... I mean, I didn't really spend much time thinking about it either way. Before the end of the band, I was pretty stressed out and freaking out. When we were in Europe on the last tour, I was pretty out of it. So, I think for my own mental health I needed to not be in that band anymore. But it's a really hard thing to go through and you gotta be surrounded by good things and good people and we were. It was just a natural time for it to end. But it's a bummer, you know? It's not easy on anybody and nobody's had fun through this whole process. It's just one of the things; it was time for it to change – to grow and evolve. But I don't think I ever would have laid my money on who would go where because it's not really like alliances or anything like that. It's just sort of the way the cookie crumbles.

#### The last track on the EP, "Echodyne Harmonic (D-Mix)" stuck out the most because it incorporated the electronic elements in which were hinted at on Vaya.

Well Tony just finished a record with another group called Nakia, which is straight electronic. It's coming out on Racecar, which is me and Paul's label. Hopefully we'll put out another record; we're pretty bad about it. We want our motto to be "the worst label ever." Something like "going out of business everyday."

#### Yeah, like Sub Pop.

So we have this little Pro Tool rig and we just left some song ideas in the computer and said we'll work on them later when we get the band going or whatever. And then we wanted to have a remix song on the EP, but since we didn't have any songs out we had to make a remix of a song that didn't exist. And we'd always talked about that; making remixes before we started writing the songs so the remix would actually inspire the real song. So we now actually have "Echodyne Harmonic" on this record and it's totally different.

#### How is it different?

Because we sampled ourselves on the remix and then we ended up not even using some of those parts in the finished song. I hope it's something that we stick to, putting out different versions of the songs and things like that. It's gonna be strange, there's not much correlation between the two songs (laughter). Like one little vocal and that's about it.

#### So are you based out of El Paso again?

Yeah, finally we're fuckin' based out of El Paso. I never moved [to LA].

**You didn't?**

No. So I had to commute. And now I make Tony commute; it's better for me.

**Is it hard for you to start over and play small clubs again?**

It's not hard at all. I think maybe I was a little nervous at first, when we went and did ten shows and in some cities we played to twenty-five people. I haven't played to twenty-five people in fuckin' years. But it was rad. Nothing about it bummed me out at all and I was sort of happy with myself afterwards [about] not being bummed out, you know? I didn't know how used to the lifestyle I had gotten, because obviously you get used to it whether you like it or not. But no, it was really fun. This is a challenge to us because we're coming out of a band where none of us were the singer so it's sort of like you have to work twice as hard to come back and play to the same fans and say "don't give up on us yet. Look what we're doing here," without trying to sell it to people. I've always just enjoyed getting on stage and playing; I play for people. If I didn't want to play for people I'd just stay at home. And I've always enjoyed it since I was a kid. It's part of my personality. Plus, I get to be the frontman now which is rad. I'm having a really good time and I get to crack jokes during the shows and stuff— it's not quite as serious.

**Are you carrying through the same no-slam dancing rules and those types of ideals to this band?**

We're going to be more careful. I don't want anyone getting hurt at a show, but I think I also learned a lot of lessons in ATDI. I think sometimes it's almost like taking someone's freedom away. So I don't really know how we're gonna do it. I thought we wouldn't be as heavy, but I think we are (laughter). I hope things are improving. I've seen a lot of other bands start doing it [addressing the crowd] now too, like the Deftones, they just say "take care of each other and be careful," and if it looks bad, they'll stop. Because I was so bad about it in ATDI. I would make just a giant ass of myself. Like if one kid crowd-surfed at a show with 2,000 people I would stop and be like "What the fuck are you doing?" and totally make an ass out of myself. Mike D actually came up to me one day and said "you're just making a big old ass of yourself," just the way I was handling it. I would be so hyped up on the energy from playing and I just had it so in my head that any amount of that was wrong, I sort of lost objectivity, a little bit. But I don't know, I want to have the least amount of rules possible for anything. I wanna do whatever we want to

do between the four of us.

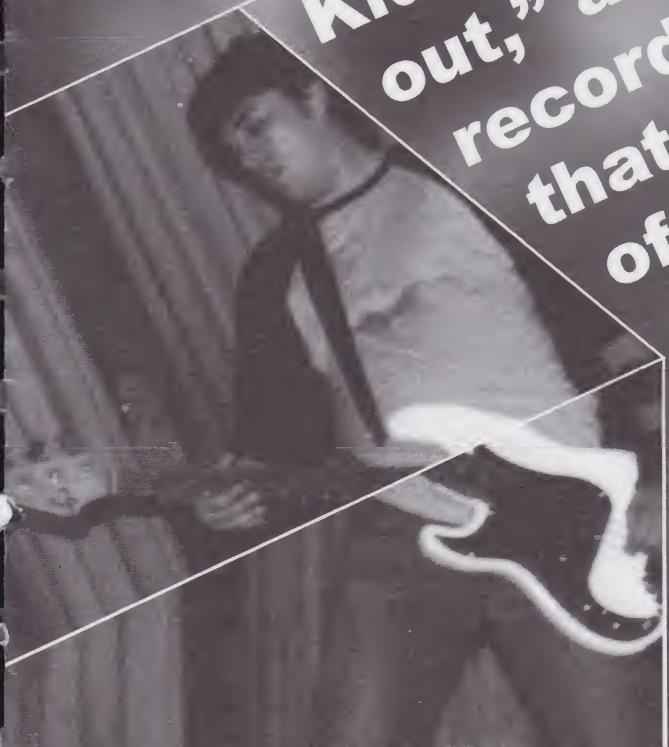
**I know you signed to Dreamworks right away, and the point of this interview isn't why your old band broke up, but are you scared of the same outcome with this band?**

No. I'm sure I'll give the full story someday, but right at the end of ATDI, I had this conversation with a bona fide rockstar and I just unloaded on him and told him all my complaints and all my gripes and how I was worried and didn't know what I was doing. You know, the full on cliché indie band gets big starts to lose his head (laughter). And it's such a cliché, but it's honestly what was going on in my head. I really couldn't cope at all with what was going on. We had this 15-minute conversation and he said, "When we started our band we wanted to be the Clash, and the Clash played in stadiums. Do you want to be in the Clash or do you want to be in Fugazi? You just have to figure out what you want to be so when you get there you're not scared of it." And it just made so much sense. When we started this band, I just felt so much better about what I was doing and why I was doing it. If you come from the punk scene there's so much punk rock guilt that comes with everything. And if your band gets big— which doesn't happen to that many bands— it really fucks with your mind because you've grown up this whole time hating what you're becoming and then you become it. You're on the cover of magazines and you're on TV and kids start fucking going off on you like you used to go off on other bands. I'm so guilty; I didn't buy the first Atlantic Jawbox record because it was on Atlantic and I thought they'd sold out and I was so pissed until I heard the record and I was like "God Damn!" (laughter) It's just part of growing up. I was 17 when ATDI started and I was 24 when it broke up, and that's a lot of growing up to do. I had six months to really sort of sit around. And if you have six months to not do anything and think about your life and what you want to do, you come out a lot more focused. I hadn't really had a chance to do that because we were so busy all the time.

**So do you want Sparta to be the Clash or Fugazi?**

Well, we signed to Dreamworks. I put out records for other bands, I'd put out our own records; I just don't want to. And that's the thing, it's not a source of pride for me, it's a reality. I know how to put out records, I'm not worried about it, and if somebody wants to tell me how to run my band they're more than welcome to have their opinion but I'm more than welcome to say I don't want to hear it. Not that I'm against debating people, and I love the punk rock theoretical debate,

**Kids would be like, "you sold out," and I'm like, "don't buy the record, dude!" How hard is that? You take 2 hours out of your day to wait for me to come out of a hotel so you can tell me that? Get a fucking hobby, go volunteer, go work in a homeless shelter.**



I hope I do 'til I'm old because it's entertaining and it's fun and it's part of the whole aesthetic of how I grew up. But also there's a reality for my life, and the reality for my life is that I'm married. I want to have kids. I want to be a dad. I want my kids to be able to go to good colleges. I want to have health insurance for them. It's just different priorities, and I want to write music to share with people as many as I can. I would never write for the radio and I would never write for MTV, but I'm not gonna *not write* for that. I'm not gonna turn my back on that stuff cause I see it as a good tool.

**What do you think of the state of mainstream rock now? With the success of ATDI and Jimmy Eat World do you think there's a place for your music?**

I don't know, man. You think it's going away and then Creed comes out and is fuckin' number one on the charts for 25 weeks in a row, dude.

**But don't you feel like even the nu-metal backlash has been going on for years?**

it. And I think towards the end of ATDI I finally learned how to say that. Kids would be like, "you sold out and you did this blah, blah, blah," and I'm like don't buy the record dude! How hard is that? You take 2 hours out of your day to wait for me to come out of a hotel so you can tell me that? Get a fucking hobby, go volunteer, go work in a homeless shelter. Do something! I don't get it. But then they still want you to sign something (Jim imitates low voice), "Can you sign this for my brother, dude? You're a dick, I just want you to know."

**I heard a rumor you were working with Coldplay, is that true?**

Yeah, we're still trying to get a country band together someday. They're making a record right now too. Me and the bass player, Guy, want to do it, we just have plans to do it. But it's getting close to reality now because he's actually built some recording stuff in his house.

**Do you have any tunes?**

No. We tried one day, he has a little mini digital recorder thing and we were staying at this little hotel in London and it was right after the tour— we cancelled the last show we ever played— and I went to London to lay low before I came home. I was coming home to get married so I wanted to be in better mental health than I was. So I went and hung out with them for a couple of days and went to the Brits, which is like the Grammys, and I was just hanging out with those dudes because they're my bros. And we actually tried to get around to writing but we ended up just getting stinkin' drunk, because we're playing country so you know we have to drink. So we're sitting there and we're playing guitar and I'm like, "let's go to the bar and have a drink and play piano." So we went down there and started playing piano and we were sort of recording things and working on this one tune, and then the bass player from U2 walked in to do an interview. And I was like, "Dude I shouldn't play piano drunk in front of the bass player of U2, we have to leave." It was so freaky man. I guess he was just doing press, he's just a normal guy, but when you've had too many beers and you're a big U2 fan, that'll get ya. But hopefully, that's one of my goals, to do a country band. It's called the London Country Rebels.

**Oh yeah?**

I'm trying to get Guy to get a tattoo before we ever write a song.

**Are you gonna get one too?**

Oh yeah, I'll get anything tattooed. I have the worst tattoos ever.

**What do you think your worst tattoo is?**

It's sort of hard to tell. I have this one, like a rocket on my arm, but it kind of looks like a cartoon spaceship and my wife thinks it looks like a submarine. It's pretty bad, I was young...you know how it goes.

**Interview photos by Ross**

**Cover photo by Kevin Scanlon**

I mean the backlash is gonna have its own brand of jock rock too (laughed). I'm totally stupefied by it, dude, to use one of those band's songs. But you know what, mass respect to any band that spends the time to get their shit together. I'm making a real point in this band to not to dis other bands. I just have like an all encompassing respect for artists no matter how bad I think their band sucks – at least they're doing something. But I don't know how long it can go on, it blows my mind. I live in a city without modern radio and it seemed like MTV, after September 11<sup>th</sup> radio changed for about a month and half. Because every morning, I would wake up at 11 and turn it on and the Strokes would be on and right after the Strokes it would be Jimmy Eat World and then it would be something else. And I was like "Damn! They're really changing the programming, they're ready for a whole new thing." The only people that are going to change modern radio in America is modern radio. It doesn't matter how many bands are out there and how many records they sell, it's gonna come down to the program directors and MTV changing it— that's who makes the trends. But a band can totally exist and sell millions of records and not be on MTV, that's totally possible; I don't think MTV should be should a measuring bar.

**What do you think of music videos in general?**

I think videos are rad. Unfortunately, they've lost their radness. People have made so many bad ones, if you do a video it makes you look like a dick for doing a video. But if you go back and watch old Ramones or Blondie [videos], it's basically just people standing in front of a camera lip-synching. Even go back to the Beatles just walking around in fields or Pink Floyd playing in that ridiculous coliseum, you know? Now it's like big budget "Thriller" movies. I just get grossed out on how much money they spend. Sonic Youth made some of the best videos ever. Have you ever seen the "Addicted to Love" video?

**No, the only I've seen is the "100%" one with all the kids skateboarding.**

There's this one where Kim Gordon is just singing in front of a blue screen with stupid shit on it and she's lip-syncing to "might as well admit it, I'm addicted to love" by Robert Palmer, but it's fucking awesome! If that was on MTV, I would be stoked to see it. But all those debates all that shit is pointless, because if you don't like MTV, don't watch

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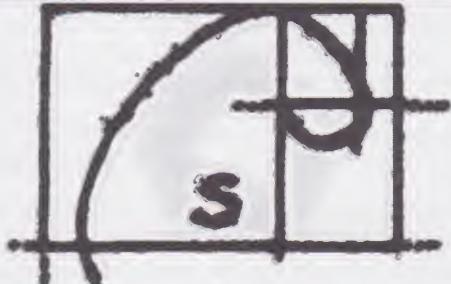
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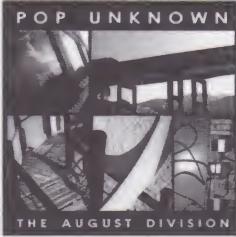
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# Trail of

I've been interested in *And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of The Dead* ever since I saw them performing and attacking each other on HBO's *Reverb*. I was flipping channels and in between concert snippets of Sugar Ray and Staind, seeing them was almost surreal. Who were these black-clad guys challenging post-punk convention and demolishing their equipment as well as the stage?

However, this interview almost didn't happen because around the time it came to fruition, *Trail of Dead* were getting press in every glossy mainstream music mag this side of *Rolling Stone*. I've always felt like *Law of Inertia* should be the alternative to these publications— who predictably focused on superficial aspects like the band's dressing habits and failed to address any of the questions I was interested in: what they felt like when they were performing, how they were coping with their success, and what they thought about the future of rock n' roll.

Then I got *Trail of Dead*'s latest record, *Source Tags & Codes*, and it smashed what I had held as my indie ethics like the neck of a splintered Les Paul after one of their sets. Combining the visceral energy of bands like Fugazi and Texas neighbors, *At the Drive-In*, with intricate melodies and the ability to make heavy music remarkably accessible, the disparate album solidified *Trail of Dead* as a creative force to be reckoned with— regardless of their fleeting media saturation.

I did this interview backstage before a show in Seattle and as you may have guessed, the beer was flowing like, well, wine. Though they are on the edge of a mainstream breakthrough, it was refreshing to see that the guys in *Trail of Dead* still have a healthy sense of humor and perspective. And thankfully, *Trail of Dead*'s brilliance hasn't gone unnoticed: throughout the interview Neil doesn't say much because he was busy in the corner signing posters for literally an hour while I spoke with Kevin (drums/guitars) and Jason (guitars) about everything from their love for overdriven noise to Nirvana and successfully completed the first *Trail of Dead* interview sans questions about their wordy moniker. With mainstream music its current state, let's pray that 2002 is the season of the Dead.

#### When you're onstage are you consciously thinking or are you on a different plane?

**Kevin:** I usually feel like I'm about to have a panic attack. I get all jittery and I can't focus on anything and my nose starts to bleed— it freaks me out. But I'm sure Jason gets elevated to a religious plane, you can tell when he's playing, his eyes roll back in his head. Have you noticed that?

#### No, I haven't seen you guys before.

**Kevin:** Oh, you haven't seen us before?

**Jason:** Sometimes you just think about whether you're gonna hit that note or the measure of the song and usually you get sort of wrapped up with the fact that you're not thinking about anything, which is nice. That's the best part, when you're not thinking about anything.

**Kevin:** Yeah, if you think about it too much, it's not the right place to be mentally— that's when you usually screw up.

#### When you see yourselves on video are you ever surprised?

**Neil:** I didn't realize I looked so stupid until I watched the Craig Kilborn show.

**Jason:** You look kind of ugly and ridiculous.

#### You don't like watching yourselves?

**Kevin:** Well, when I watch myself I look like a zombie. I just stand there and don't do anything, like I'm dead.

**Jason:** Sometimes I feel like I'm watching a porno. A bad porno (laughter)— bad gay pornography. Somebody else said that, didn't they?

**Kevin:** Really?

**Neil:** Yeah my dad, "you guys look like you're in a gay porno together."

**Kevin:** Really?

**Jason:** Is that what he said?

**Neil:** No. [laughter]

**Jason:** Wow, I didn't know your dad was into gay porn.

**Neil:** He's heavy into gay porn. How do you think I came out the way I did? (laughter)

**I read an interview you guys did in Rolling Stone and one of you said you were glad The White Stripes and The Strokes are making it into the mainstream, which is all well and good, but I was**

**curious if you were sick of hearing about the Strokes.**

**Jason:** You sort of get sick of it in one respect, but it's good that they are representing a rock sound that is not, I guess, nu metal or campy and cheesy to the point where it's ridiculous.

**Neil:** But they're a really good band...

**Jason:** Yeah, lyrically it's good to hear something on the radio beside "smack my ass" or whatever. I like their lyrics a lot. They have a certain amount of substance.

**Kevin:** Same thing with the White Stripes.

**Jason:** It's encouraging to have something like that in the mainstream, so we don't player-hate or get jealous.

**Do you feel a kinship with those bands even though you're different musically?**

**Jason:** I think they're trying to bring sort of a fresh approach to the past and we're trying to press forward. I don't know how, but we're trying. We never wanted to sound like a garage band in the beginning. In Austin there seemed to be a lot of garage bands when we first started, a lot of three-chord bands like The Mono Men or Gas Huffer; but now it seems kind of refreshing. Back then you wanted to stand out so you would write songs that were a little more experimental.

**Do you feel like your sound is accessible enough for kids who listen to mainstream radio? Is that even something you think about?**

**Jason:** We try not to think about anything that's not worth thinking about. You spend energy thinking about stuff like that, it's going to alter the way you write and the way you cater to the masses. You cater to the band you're in with three other people.

**Neil:** We grew up on the same pop music that a lot of other people did so that's a part of our writing too. There's an element of pop sensibility in what we do. I don't understand why if it comes out in our music in a certain way why people can't understand it in that same way. We all come from a similar musical background, a collective rock heritage.

**I read an interview where your band kept being referred to as the next Nirvana? Can there be another Nirvana?**

**Jason:** No, there can't. Because they came at a time when it was so ripe and everything was so culturally void in pop music that they were the first and last to do so.

**Kevin:** It would have eventually happened, they were just the band it happened to. To me, Nirvana was like Dinosaur Jr. or something like that that I listened to for some reason. They had that mass appeal and kind of crossed over. Same thing with Sonic Youth...

**Jason:** People were hoping Sonic Youth would change things.

**Kevin:** They did. I mean they brought Nirvana into the mainstream.

**What about when people write that *Trail of Dead* is going to save rock n' roll?**

**Jason:** It's ridiculous. It's a way for a journalist to sensationalize and make something seem bigger than it is. I'm not discounting our music, but come on, how many journalists have said that about other bands? They said that about the Strokes, so it just seems like a tired cliché. I just don't feel like it applies to us in any form. If they said this is a great album, you know, a very valid album, that's one thing, but they're gonna save rock n' roll! YEEAAH!



# the Dead

**Kevin:** Somebody needs to.

**Can one band do that?**

**Jason:** I don't know.

**What would they sound like?**

**Jason:** [The] Jesus and Mary Chain.

**Neil:** Led Zeppelin.

**Jason:** The greatness of Led Zeppelin or the Beatles...

**Neil:** Or maybe they would blend urban hip-hop music and rock n' roll into one musical form. Like urban street inner-city music and metal from out in the suburbs together into one cohesive sound. That would be the perfect band, it would pull everybody in. Everybody would come together.

**Jason:** That's a great idea (laughter).

**You guys should work on that.**

**Neil:** Yeah, I think we will.

**With all of the media attention you've been getting lately, are you scared of ending up like your neighbors, At The Drive-In?**

**Jason:** Yeah, it's a worry. We're gonna do our best to not self-destruct, to try to keep it in check. I don't know what happened to them but it's kind of a sad case because they were the band that could have been something massive and it just imploded and it's tragic. We were hoping to kind of follow them to the same area of music where it becomes challenging and fresh.

**Kevin:** I don't think we were following them, we were just from the same scene.

**Jason:** I was voting for them.

**Kevin:** You voted for them? I voted for Nader, man.

**Jason:** If there was an election that year with all the bands I wanted to, besides our band, do well in the mainstream, it would go to them. It's just kind of a sad thing.

**Kevin:** They'd been touring for so long I think they just got fatigued I guess playing with each other or something, I don't know what happened.

**Do you pace yourselves or think, "we're not going to do too many shows or interviews," so you don't overexpose the band?**

**Jason:** Well, I guess this is gonna be the true test 'cause we're going to be touring a hell of the lot so we'll see to what degree we'll go and how far it'll go. We toured a lot in past years but this is gonna be the most we've ever done.

**Kevin:** We've been touring for a long time ourselves, but in spurts.

**Jason:** I think the conditions for touring for us has improved greatly partly because we've gotten better as a band and people are supporting our music. When you get shows when no one comes and your van breaks down, that was just hell. Being in a tin can going from Point A to Point B and back again.

**Kevin:** That's a really stressful part for me.

**Jason:** I wish we could just materialize.

**Kevin:** Where's Shatner when you need him?

**I know you play up the intellectual angle of the band and I wanted to know...**

**Jason:** What? In-tel-lec-tual? (laughter). What are you talkin' about?

**Kevin:** I'm an edjumicated man.

**Do you worry about coming off as pretentious?**

**Jason:** The good thing about us is we can laugh at how silly we are. When we do become too pretentious, someone will just write a bunch of bad shit on the internet about us and make fun of us.

**Neil:** How pretentious can you be when all the magazines focus on is our dressing habits and how much we break our equipment?

**Kevin:** Drink a lot, break stuff, really it's hard— they're really smart.

**Neil:** It goes back to the idea of the noble savage.

**Jason:** There's nothing wrong with being too intellectual. I think it's necessary right now. There's so many dumb rock bands out there.

**Did you all go to college?**

**Jason:** Yeah, I dropped out. Neil's got a degree in anthropology and all of us have pseudo-degrees in something, I think Conrad has a degree in pop culture or something strange like that.

**Kevin:** I was a film major.

**Did you ever think about going to grad school?**

**Kevin:** Unfortunately, I got sidetracked by the band. I plan to do that in the future but I can't do one of those courses on the internet.

**So how many things have you signed today?**

**Jason:** A lot.

**Neil:** 125. They're all going to college radio for making us number one for the past five weeks.

**I was curious, is feedback something you've always been interested in?**

**Jason:** When I was 16, I started listening to Fugazi and I was so blown away by the way they would make an amp sound like certain noises I'd never heard before. Or Kevin Shields [My Bloody Valentine]; he turned it into something more orchestral. It's very musical, it's very attractive, and it burns a hole in your head.

**Do you feel like it works better live?**

**Kevin:** Yeah, it's in the way you execute. I've heard it on certain records done really well but it can't be done too much. The biggest thing is it creates a certain power of the moment. I'm just really interested in peaks and valleys – the way you can take you up to a certain point where you feel you're about to drop off the planet and then you're swimming in a calm tranquil lake.

**That sounds pretty risky. Are there ever nights where it just doesn't work?**

**Kevin:** That happens a lot.

**Jason:** You're like a soldier in Vietnam when the gun locks up on you, you have to pull out the bayonet and improvise. Your plane is about to crash and you have to learn to fly the plane – it's just like the Foo Fighters video with Tenacious D.

**Kevin:** I just bought that record.

**What else have you bought recently?**

**Kevin:** I just bought the White Stripes CD, I'm really into the White Stripes. We played with them in Ireland. They played right before we played and they were really great and we just played in Detroit where they're from and we rode on the same bus with them to the show. They picked us up and Conrad threw up on the bus. We had all our equipment in the back and he threw up in the aisle and I had this newspaper and I was throwing it down on the ground.

**Jason:** The Faint. I like them a lot – electro-rock kind of new wave...and Slipknot.

**Are you serious?**

**Jason:** I'm serious. I really like *Iowa* a lot. It's an amazing record. It reminds me of Slayer. My moods change, I could go from R & B to Minor Threat.

**The Faint are on tour with No Doubt now, have you been offered any tours like that?**

**Jason:** We toured with the Foo Fighters in the UK. We do well there, it was fun. It was just one of those things where we toured with them and got a different perspective.

**Kevin:** It's not really worth it for the level we're at. We got offered to open up for Cheap Trick, which I thought was funny, to do two weeks with them.

**Jason:** I like them, but at the same time, what the hell would people think? They'd hate it.

**Photos by Sarah Mamott**





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# PTL I E H O D N R E O

By Jonah



I don't usually make mix CD's for people. It's too time consuming, plus, like John Cusak meticulously explained in *High Fidelity*, appropriating someone else's art to express yourself is far more complicated than it seems. However, every time I do get around to making a mix, Pedro the Lion has always on it and, most of the time, it's the song people like best for the simple fact that art of David Bazan—and its synthesis in his brainchild Pedro the Lion—are nearly impossible *not* to identify with.

No matter how bleak the subject matter, there's a part of ourselves—whether we're conscious of it or not—in all of his characters. Whatever their vice: greed, lust, adultery, or just rueful contemplation, it is easy to find part of yourself in everyone Bazan describes in his music. Honestly, I've always thought of Bazan as a fiction writer of sorts; someone who is able to get inside of the heads of other people and make us almost *become them* until the song is over. It's a gift that's rare for any artist and nearly impossible to come across in our tiny sub-genre.

As cliched as it sounds, Bazan also has the ability to re-invent himself with every release. From his early acoustic ditties to 1999's audio novella, *Winners Never Quit*, Bazan has been pushing the boundaries of the traditional singer/songwriter role. With his latest album, *Control*, he adds an aggressive flavor to the music while preserving the introspective shine of his earlier works. From driving drum-driven tracks like "Rapture" and "Penetration," to synth-friendly electro-romps like "Indian Summer," to the album's final track, "Rejoice," which drags along so slowly that you can hear Bazan forming each syllable before he breathes it into eternity—the album is the apex of Bazan's career.

But aside from the music, there is David Bazan the person. How does Bazan's well-documented Christian faith influence his songwriting? Why does this record sound the way it does? Is he in need of Prozac or does he just create very somber art? What does he read? To me, these aspects are just as interesting as Bazan's brilliant music. What stood out the most to me during the course of this interview was his extremely bashful nature. Here, finally we have an artist who afford to be boastful because he's got the talent to back it up, yet when pressed on his personality he jokingly refers to himself as a "fat, bearded guy" and plods onto the next question.

If you haven't heard *Control* yet, I urge to you to pick up the record, as well as his others, and listen to them before reading this interview in order to completely understand the specifics of what we're talking about. But if you really want to understand, forget about this interview and listen to the music: soak up every syllable, absorb the art work, lose yourself in a corrupt empire that drives people to unspeakable extremes, yet manages to transcend the darkness with beauty, love and, no matter



#### how dismal things may seem... hope.

I want to start off by telling you I really dig the new record. Obviously, it's much more band-oriented than your other releases, which are more of a man-and-his-guitar type vibe. I was wondering, did you write the songs with that goal in mind or did it just turn out that way?

Well, it did just sort of turn out this way. I'm trying to think how each song came about. I guess this record has been a little different. I had written a lot of the previous stuff on acoustic guitar and then played it on electric. But this record definitely arose probably in reaction to some other records in that was a little more drum-heavy. And when I was conceiving the songs the drum parts really played a bigger role in some of them and sort of set the tone for what the album was gonna be. Then, there was a band around for me to be like, "hey, can we try this?" and then we would; whereas when I was writing *Winners* [*Never Quit*] and the other records, there wasn't anyone else around. It was just me, so I would just multi-track stuff. This time around we actually did that and then we got to play the songs live quite a bit, most of them anyways, before I actually recorded them.

**When you write your albums do you conceive the way the songs fit together as a loose concept first and then break it into chapters?**

With *Winners* that's what I did. With this one, kind of in reaction to the way *Winners* went, I tried to just write songs. I kind of had an idea of what I wanted, where I wanted it to go or a theme it all loosely hung on. But having that in mind, I tried to put it away and just write songs knowing that subconsciously it would work out however it should. And then at a certain point, when I got maybe 60 or 70 percent of the lyrics done, I really started realizing that there is a story there. Again, I tried to put the story out of my mind and write what I thought would be the best thing for each little moment, but I'm pretty sure that knowing that the story was there everything kind of went that way to sort of finish all the little ends up. And even then, it's not a story the way that *Winners* was; it's very simplistic. The plot's just a marriage falling apart, more or less, and it's not very much more specific than that as far as plot points...well, except for the murder of the husband. (laughter)

**When you say this record was a reaction to the way *Winners* went, what do you mean by that?**

**Did *Winners* get a negative reaction?**

No, actually the reaction to *Winners* was extremely positive. But I felt like and I still feel like with *Winners* I was shooting for something pretty grand and what came out of it was fine, but it was quite a bit less than what I wanted it to be. And so when *Winners* came out, I was really glad it was met with generally positive comments because I really kind of needed encouragement about that record. I wasn't really confident 'cause I didn't feel that great about it. And so because of that, I was really setting out to make out a record that I liked and I was trying to remedy things that I felt I had maybe mistepped on with *Winners* and done some things that I wasn't really that happy with. And so reacting to it that way, my feelings about this record was that when I was done with it I could hand it to somebody and they would say, "Fuck this record. I hate it, I think you're stupid," I would just be like, "Fine. I really like it still and there's nothing you would be able to do to change that."

**Is that how you feel about *Control*?**

More or less, yeah. It's closer to what I set out to make than any other record I've made. There are some things I'd definitely re-record if I had the chance, or stupid nit-picky stuff like that, but in general I'm really happy with the songs and I think the arrangements are as good or better than any other arrangements that I've done. I like the lyrics a lot and the recording is more or less pretty okay for what I was shooting for. So I do, I feel good about it. I like it.

**Me too. Did you ever write any songs during these sessions where you thought, "This is a really good song but it doesn't fit on this album"?**

Yeah, but usually they kind of counted themselves out because musically they were not as viable. Like I said, I wasn't even shooting for a story so I didn't really make a lot of decisions based on the lyrical content. And musically, I was just trying to make a set of songs that felt like they kind of hung together. Some people have complained that maybe "Progress" is out of place on the record or something, and I can see where that comes from; whereas lyrically I felt like it fit really well. But at a certain point there were a couple songs that were a part of the record that aren't anymore, and the reason why those didn't work is not because of the lyrics, it's just because musically they ended up being kind of lame or not on the same level as the other songs maybe are or were.

#### I was curious, do you write any fiction outside of songwriting?

I've tried to and I will continue to attempt it, but I haven't found myself to be very good at it. There's something about the restrictions of a certain number of syllables and a certain number of lines in a song that really helps me edit myself. I'm not so good at it as of yet and maybe I'll never be, but I definitely am gonna keep at it because I would really like to be able to write fiction apart from music.

**Who do you read, fiction-wise?**

*Nine Stories* by JD Salinger has really continued to be something that is really inspiring, even more so than his other things. Even though I haven't read *Franny and Zooey* yet, but I've read the other two or three depending on what you consider [*Raise High*] *The Roofbeam, Carpenters*. I've read some John Steinbeck, his sparse way that he writes and the characters are really profound and compelling to me. Paul Auster is actually strangely similar to John Steinbeck to me in the stark way he kind of frames things. But his thing is inspiring to me in the way that, especially the New York trilogy, is so conceptual. They're like case studies in solitude, and the way they all kind of work together is really vague and really great and really mysterious.

**It's interesting you bring up Salinger because with the Glass family he really got inside of their heads and thought of them as real people and I feel like you have that same ability. How do you identify with so many people across the spectrum and write from their point of view convincingly enough that I buy it, and I'm sure other people do too?**

In the whole EP, like writing about heroin addiction and stuff like that. I just knew people that were dealing with that, and in my own life--although not quite as ravaging or intense-- there were similar cycles. So it was pretty easy to write that. I think all personal failure has sort of similar elements and just the specifics are different.

**Obviously, there's a lot of yourself in your lyrics as well. Is it hard for you to differentiate between reality and your imagination or does it just blend together?**

It does blend together and I think that's what's so fun about it sometimes. I don't really know where the one starts and the other begins so it's safer for me to just call it all fiction because I really don't know. As far as the events happening themselves, it is totally all fiction, but to what degree? It's a real interesting interaction-- your imagination and experience-- so it is pretty blurry to me.

**I read that *Control* got pushed back because you were going to write an article on Christianity and the Arts, is there any truth to that?**

It did get pushed back, but that's not why. That's a different thing that I'm still trying to work on, but more for the Christian element of the audience which I would interact with more at festivals, or one festival in particular in the summer.

**You mean Cornerstone?**

Yeah.

**So that wouldn't be something you would include in a record?**

No, 'cause I think that's very specific in its appeal to a particular audience. If other people are interested in it, it'll be made available through the web site or something.

**I was reading various message boards today that said things like,**



**"Control deals with very unChristian subject matter that the kids in my youth group aren't going to like." Would your essay address those types of issues?**

It would, but it wasn't necessarily in support of this record but more in a general idea about the nature of art and what I think it should be for the Christian perspective, kind of in opposition to what it has been over the last long while. It's interesting because the audience I might have sought to aim that at or just to create a discussion at-- because of the way people might respond to this record-- I might be losing quite a bit of credibility [with], so they wouldn't really care about any point of view I might have. Even if it was based on writers they trusted and believed in, which is probably what it would be-- just like a school-type paper compiling many different ideas around my thesis.

**Were you aware when you were writing the lyrics that when you say "cum" in a song, there goes a huge audience?**

Right (laughter). Maybe I was diluting myself thinking that maybe people wouldn't respond as harshly as they have. But it wasn't until after I had already committed to some of the more vulgar elements in the records that I started to realize, "oh brother, this is gonna be bad. People are gonna be really bummed" or certain people are gonna be. But at that point, that was what it needed to be and the creative process had already worked itself out in a way that I couldn't really deny that's what should be there.

**Personally, I'm glad it came out the way it did.**

Well, thank you.

**When people meet you do they think you're a really depressed guy?**

I don't know, they don't usually say....

**They're not constantly asking you if you're all right?**

No, no. I actually am really at peace or whatever as a person and really enjoy my life a lot. And so I don't know what I put off to people who meet me at first, but people don't treat me like that. I think it's pretty obvious I'm usually in a pretty good mood and so I don't think when people see me they're not like, "Oh man, he's just so bummed and he's just fat and bearded...bummer" (laughter).

**I know you've worked with TW Walsh and Casey, but how much of Pedro the Lion is just you and how has that changed?**

I think in the last year or so I've really kind of realized that's what it has been and I've always been shooting for it to be something else. When it was kind of on the verge of being something else, I realized I was so comfortable with just me being Pedro the Lion and [I] had developed this working model of Pedro the Lion that was really functional. The people I'm playing with definitely influence what's going on and more profoundly on this record than I think before. They were definitely credited on the record, like the end riff on "Second Best," me and Casey just jammed for a while. Finally, it isn't clear who came up with it, we were just both part of the process. The same thing with basically the verse riff in "Penetration." That was Casey just fucking around, and he had this chord progression and so you know it was this thing he came up with and we both worked on and perfected it-- those things that had never really happened before. When it is me and then the hired gun thing it really does change things a lot; who's playing what influences me pretty directly sometimes.

**In the press release it says, "Critics might finally be persuaded to stop labeling the band a quiet folky outfit." Does that bother you that anyone would think to label you a "folky outfit"?**

Yeah, the press release usually is run by me, the artist, but there's elements that the label is more concerned with. What you're saying is true, that it's pretty logical that they [critics] would have considered it a more quiet folky thing and I noticed that at the web site at Jade Tree and that's just kind of more a curiosity to me than anything. Some people have responded kind of strangely to it and it makes sense why, because it has been [folky].

**It also seems that there's sort of a negative connotation with the term "folky," especially in the indie scene.**

I really quite enjoy certain folk music, especially Woody Guthrie. There's really some punk rock things going on in his music. The dude was more political than Fugazi was for sure. There are aspects of it that I really enjoy, but I can see how it's kind of looked down on.

**Even though the songs are pretty bleak it seems, during songs like "Rejoice," there's a theme of hopefulness overriding it all.**

Well, I've heard that said before, just about the Pedro records in general, that as bleak as they are sometimes that there is that thing and it probably just has to do with the fact that that's kind of who I am. The content of my

conversations isn't usually bleak, but if we're talking about some thing like politics or world economics usually the subject matter is pretty bleak. But then in the end, it's not to the point of me just despairing without any hope or anything. The subject matter is often dark but I'm not dark to the point of profound despair, just dark to the point of just being honest or real

**Have you thought about performing any of the new songs solo?**

I actually did "Options" and "Penetration." I tried to do "Indian Summer" and it didn't work out so well. I'd have to practice it more cause there's a lot of different elements going on that I'd have to try to represent. Basically "Progress" works just fine. "Magazine" I thought about doing it but it's kind of dependent on the keyboard part, I think. "Rehearsal" doesn't really work. "Second Best"....I guess it could work, but it's not totally right that way. I did a little solo tour recently and those four that I was able to kind of do.

**Do you have a preference playing solo vs. playing with a band?**

Oh, I much prefer playing with a band. It's just a total blast these days.

**And I guess it's better playing with the band live than playing along with them on tape behind you, right?**

Oh yeah. When I play by myself I just play usually with electric guitar. I might have some pedals with some synthy junk goin' on, but it's pretty much real stripped-down.

**So we'll see you with the band for a while?**

Oh yeah, definitely. I've only really done that [performed solo] in the last couple, three or four years. Just once for this brief little tour and now it's gonna be a four-piece for a while and I think that's better than a three.

**Who's in the band right now?**

This guy Casey Foubert, he plays drums. Jonathan Ford plays bass, and then TW or Tim Walsh plays guitar and keyboards

**I actually just got his solo record.**

Oh, the *Blue Laws* one? I really like that record.

**Have you heard the new Wilco album?**

Yeah, I listened to it yesterday and today.

**What do you think?**

It's pretty good. I actually like it a lot more the more I listen to it. The first couple of times I listened to it I was doing construction so I wasn't totally focused on it, but I was listening to it on headphones and I really liked it.

**Do you feel any type of kinship with them?**

I mean there's kind of the melancholic thing and there's something more than folk music that has kind of informed Pedro the Lion's thing. Like a little of an alt-country thing at some level, and that dude [Jeff Tweedy] is kind of the king of alt-country. So I think what it is is me being influenced by Wilco in that way. I think there's something really great about combining folk dynamics with electronic elements, like the keyboard on "Indian Summer."

**Both of you are treading new ground there.**

Yeah, yeah. They're definitely some things going on in that record that are pretty interesting and possibly new and I think it's pretty great on *Foxtrot*, *Yankee*, *Hotel* (laughter). Where they came up with that I really have no idea...

**Photos by Ross**





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# DAG NASTY



*by Ross*



Dave Smalley is a very very interesting guy. As anyone involved in punk rock over the past twenty years knows, he is a luminary in the pages of the punk rock history book. His resume boasts frontman spots in ground-breaking acts like Boston hardcore's DYS, Down By Law, All, The Sharpshooters, and of course Washington DC's seminal Dag Nasty. Throughout his career he has spearheaded a vocal style of very honest, very personal lyrics about friendships, hardships, and life when things don't go as planned. His songs are always direct and to the point, and they provide some great soundtracks too. Dave Smalley has always had a knack for writing about difficult subjects to discuss yet still making them sound hopeful and uplifting. And, whether they realize it or not, the entire late-'80s northeastern hardcore scene owes the man a debt.

In my studies of punk rock over the last ten years I've encountered few musicians that have done as much and been as many places as Mr. Smalley. In my readings on punk rock history recently I found out that one of the things Dave did after Dag Nasty-- which led to his departure from the band, actually-- was pursue a master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. At the same time I read this factoid I had been fiddling with an article on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict which was entering the one and a half year mark of its current stage. The article was not going as planned since it sounded too didactic and preachy. I couldn't seem to voice my concern over the situation, my sympathies for both sides, and worries over how the leftist and the rightist political spheres in the US have viewed the Intafada. So, I figured I would go out on a limb and try to talk about the conflict with Dave. I really wasn't sure how much he knew or how much he followed the conflict's history, and you'll notice that I have followed it very closely for the past five years or so. To my delight, Dave is not only extremely well versed in the conflict's history, but he has profound and stunning insights into what makes both sides tick and what makes the fight so complicated on the US homefront after September 11.

Honestly, as Dave mentions at the end of the interview, I'm not sure if anyone will care. This is just two know-it-alls running their mouths. Also, if you readers haven't followed the peace process as we have you may have no idea what is going on in our talk. But, with even a

basic knowledge of the conflict, you might find that there is far more to the fighting over there than most people care to address in their daily news patronage or what the punk rock elite considers to be kosher. This is one of the most amazing interviews I've ever done. Perhaps you too will see why.

**Dave, I was wondering what you do when you're not playing music? I know you've been in a bazillion important bands but like all musicians below the MTV level I'm guessing you have a day job.**

Yes, I'm a youth editor. I work with teenagers all the time for a local paper. It's a really fun job. It's a daily newspaper, and it's a great bunch of kids who write for us. All the myths you hear about teenagers are just myths, they're so wrong.

**Do they ever say, "dude, you're Dave Smalley."**

They all know Down By Law and Dag Nasty and stuff. Not all of them have listened to it but most of them have a good idea of what I do when I'm not editing.

**So, did the kind people at Revelation tell you what I had in store for this interview? Sort of.**

**Well, I've got so many questions 'cause I've been a big fan of pretty much all your bands. But instead of asking the same what-are-your-influences questions I'd like to talk about the Middle East. It came to my attention that you spent a year in Israel before you joined All. What did you do there?**

I was a graduate student in a scholarship program at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I was studying middle eastern politics, history, Arabic, Hebrew, and stuff relating to the setting.

**Wow! Are you Jewish or Muslim?**

Nope, I'm not, but as the saying goes, some of my best friends are. I was miserable at Hebrew and Arabic. I'm not bad at French but of course French and Hebrew are nothing at all alike. This was in 1986 or 1987.

**Just so I know if this is even worth doing, have you been following the conflict over the past ten years or so?**

Oh absolutely. You go out of phases where you're motivated to talk about it or read about it, but my old roommate from Israel who is Jewish and is studying to be a lawyer right now, is still one of my best friends.

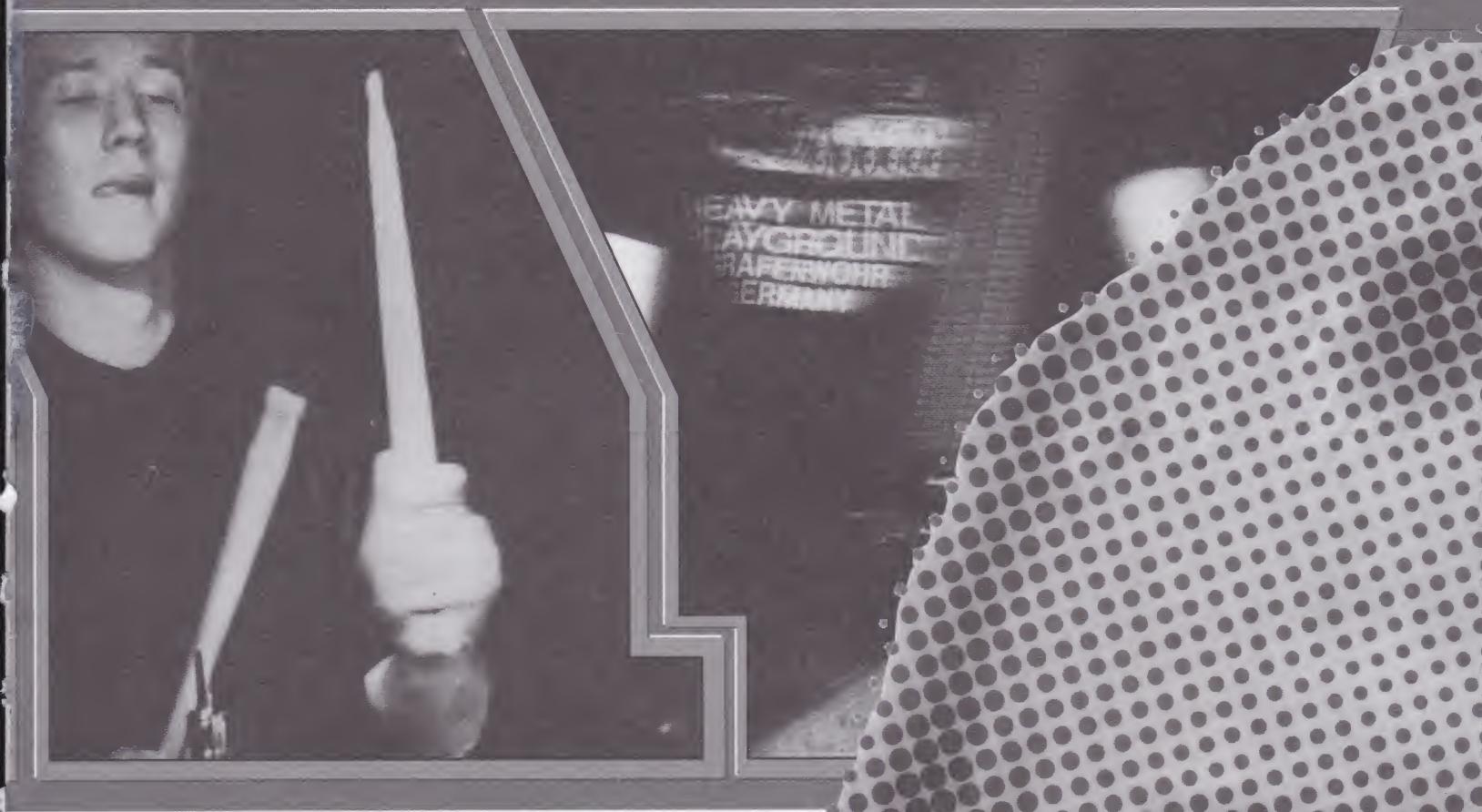
**Would you say you're more of a leftist when it comes to these issues?**

On this particular issue, yes, but I'm generally a libertarian in regular political affairs. I think everyone in the government is basically fucked. Not everyone but you can put 90% as a safe percentile. In this particular equation I'm definitely a leftist.

**Why don't you tell me how you even got interested in going to Israel and learning about the region, and please tell me what the region was like back then.**

That's a good question. I've been interested in the Middle East for a long time. I think it might





even stem from movies like *Lawrence of Arabia* where the Middle East is so beautifully shot. I was always very interested in the Ottoman Empire.

**Me too! Most people don't realize that even though Turkey was the center of the Arab world for so long, Turks are not Arabs.**

Right, they're definitely not although they definitely are Muslim. I've always been interested in Turkey and the Middle East. When I graduated from high school I planned on going to the Middle East as a goal. My parents sent me to Europe instead though. (laughter) I was working at a think tank called the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, I was doing research for a bunch of academic scholars like one who was writing about different international terror groups. He was writing a book about groups like the Gush Emunim who were an Israeli terror group that was trying to blow up the dome of the rock since it was controlled by Palestinians. He was also writing about the Japanese Red Army. My job was to go to Library of Congress with an all access pass and find books they needed, find the pages or the passages they needed, then report back. This Israeli fellow came up to me and said, "David, would you like to go to Israel?" and I told him I would.

**Was this when you were in Dag Nasty?**

This was when I was like a roadie or something. As soon as I was the singer for that band that was when the scholarship came through, so at this point I hadn't even considered playing music instead of pursuing academia. During Dag Nasty I had to make a decision and I decided to get out of the band and go to Israel.

**So, this is before the Madrid conference and before Oslo.**

This is before the Oslo Peace Accords, and in fact when I went it really was pretty mellow. When you

see what's going on there it's really pretty astounding considering the last 20 years of relative calm. I've been to Hebron, I've been all over the region, and all these places that are either blown up by Israeli tanks or suicide bombing. When I left the first Intafada had just started. It really didn't affect me too much. I remember one time I was on a bus and somebody threw a stone and that was considered a big deal. I remember talking to my grandfather and he said "keep your head down!" I told him there was no problem and that I walk around by myself. **When I was twelve, I went there and drove through the West Bank and actually went into Al Aksa, the dome of the rock.**

Yeah, me too, and it's weird that we'll probably never ever go there again since that's where this second Intafada started. Anyways, I haven't been back since 'cause I had to finish grad school and I had music and all that so I was busy. Unfortunately there's not a very big punk scene there. **Out of curiosity, did anyone know who you were out there?**

People knew me from DYS and at that point Dag Nasty really hadn't gotten known yet.

**Fifteen years later, if someone would have told you that fifteen years later a thousand Palestinians and four-hundred Israelis would have been killed in a matter of months, would you have believed them?**

Man, that's a good question. I don't think I'm surprised by it because when you have that many people living on top of each other with such diametrically opposed viewpoints that few Americans can imagine, you know, I'm not surprised. It's like the LA riots, I was disappointed by the behavior of citizens but I wasn't surprised.

**It's interesting that you're not surprised. After Oslo,**



everyone thought that statehood and peace was right around the corner, what with the Nobel Peace Prizes given to Rabin and Arafat and all.

I think the assassination of Rabin was a really terrible blow to the longevity of peace. There's that old saying that only Nixon could have gone to China since he had the right-wing conservative street cred that allowed him to go over there. I think that Shimon Peres was limited because of Rabin's death but also simply because Rabin had more street credibility. Rabin, like Regan, really had the cred to do whatever he wanted to do which allowed peace to come to the agenda. It's interesting that you mention Peres, because only a year and a half ago he was talking about a Middle East where industry boomed and there was peace and prosperity and open borders, and now look at the place.

My own feelings are that it's going to take the death of the entire leadership generation on both sides for it to really ever change. I've had this theory for a long time. Sharon and Arafat and Papa Smurf before him and all these other guys, they were raised killing each other. Maybe now it's going to be like that again, but before this I said the only people who could really put aside the wounds would be a new generation that didn't fight in the Independence War or something.

**Interesting. I have mixed feelings on that because the ruling party in Israel right now are a bunch of old world assholes in some sense but in some ways Yasir Arafat is a fucking liberal compared to a lot of the younger generations of Palestinians.**

I think that's why the Israelis didn't take him out a long time ago. So, I think you might be right about that. But I think it will take the younger generations to erase the bitterness. Remember, when they talk about "right of return" for Palestinians who lost their homes upon Israeli independence, Arafat has been there and seen those people. Someone born in like 1975 or after they know about the right but they don't have the personal connection. I think that's the key. When you have that personal connection is when you lose the ability to be moderated.

**So do you think peace is possible or do you think Oslo will be scrapped and they should just build walls and enforce them? I mean, predictions are tough, but what do you think?**

You're right about predictions in that part of the world. They're never for sure, like a mirage in the desert. I would say the only possible chance for there to be peace is for there to be a stated, widely-recognized statement by the Israelis that talks about the Palestinian need and right to a state. All that talk about a unified Jerusalem, let's face it: neither side can control Jerusalem completely. It's anathema to religious Jews and Arabs. It's going to have to be an internationally divided city. The settlements also have to go. I don't know if you had a chance to go to the settlements but so many of the settlers are not Israeli born but are foreign born and very very very extreme right wing people. It blew my mind to hear people talk in settlements along the West Bank with New York accents. They are often horribly racist about Arabs. You can't expect that to be accepted by the Palestinians.

**It would be like if the**

**Canadians started to move their border or the Mexicans started to simply take land in Texas.**

Right! I think it's going to take more acceptance. It's also going to a Palestinian leader on the other side of the fence who says, "of course Israel has the right to exist and of course we're going to end our fifty year fight to drive them back over the sea." It's going to take those kind of revolutionary statements.

**It's too bad though because American Jews, and even pre-World War II European Jews, are thought to be very liberal and very egalitarian.**

True, look at how Jews vote in elections, they nearly always vote Democratic. I think sometimes to their detriment. After all, Richard Nixon was who put us on stage 3 nuclear alert during the Yom Kippur war in Israel.

**Yup, the Republicans are often much bigger supporters of Israel than the Democrats, especially post September 11<sup>th</sup>.**

It's interesting that that still hasn't managed to translate into some more American involvement.

**Israel is run by the far right. It's run by the religious right, but people in power like Sharon are on the right.**

I feel badly for a guy like Shimon Peres who is on the left even though he's in Sharon's cabinet. He's got some good ideas and he seems to have his heart in the right place, but he's like Jimmy Carter, no one really takes him seriously before or after the Intafada started. My friend from Israel who I lived with was a huge Peres fan and now my friend is very hawkish and right. Peres has been tougher lately, though. I think there's a consensus that they have to do something about the terrorism from the Palestinians. I'd much rather they do targeted strikes and keep the civilian and property damage to a minimum rather than blowing up everything near a target. They're losing an amazing amount of credibility merely because their gunships have poor aim.

**My dad talks about this eternal public relations battle that the Israelis are losing. I think in a lot of cases where the Israelis have shown restraint, even for extended periods of time, it's hard for them to show that to the world.**

I think Israel relied for a bit too long on saying, "we're the little guy here." But after 1967 and after 1973 and after the ratio over Beirut for planes shot down was 98 to 1 you can't keep saying, "we're the little guy anymore."

**Agreed. When the US and Germany—who many people don't even know are a huge supporter of Israel—it's hard to plead inferiority.**

Right! That was really where they lost their inferiority. They said, "we're surrounded," but hey, you're surrounded by fucking Lebanon, not Soviet Russia.

**I'm in a quandary here. I'm Jewish and I'm an American, and even though I don't love the idea of nationalism, I still feel a tie to Israel.**

I think that's wonderful, I still feel a tie to Scotland. I have zero problem with that. **I don't have a problem with that either because I believe in the culture and tradition of Judaism rather than the religious aspects of the faith. I always that Menachim Begin's first proclamation as Prime Minister of Israel was pretty fucking incredible. In it, he granted citizenship to all these Vietnamese people who had been expelled from South East Asia and were more or less floating around the water with no place to go.**

Began invited them to Israel saying, "we remember when we were boat people." Any nation that would do that is pretty fucking amazing and relatively unhypocritical in my book.

That's like Jewish Ethiopians who were airlifted to Israel. In one day the Israelis saved the lives of like 40,000 Ethiopian people! I don't think Israeli people are at all bad. I've had many Israeli friends that are some of the nicest, most caring people I've ever come across. I've been to their weddings and parties and I've eaten their food. They are not bad people at all. One of the things American Jews sometimes fall into, which is understandable considering how the Jews have been treated over the past millennium, is that criticism of an Israeli government is to be looked down upon. That's not fair at all. I can critique any administration in America without being anti-American, or I can critique Tony Blair in Scotland without being anti-British, so why am I anti-Semitic if I criticize Israel? That's very unfortunate that American politicians are often target by APAC and other lobbying groups simply because they voice concern over Israeli actions. I think the most positive outcome Israel could hope for is if they start getting treated like a real nation that is judged the same way other nations are judged.

**At the same time, I recently saw the band Strike Anywhere in concert. You know them and Anti-Flag?**

I know Strike Anywhere and I'm friendly with Anti-Flag as well.

I went to a show and both bands are some of the most leftist bands in the more mainstream spectrum of punk. I'm not a huge fan of Anti-Flag mainly because I haven't heard tons of their stuff, but everything I've heard I've really liked. I love Strike Anywhere. As a matter of fact I interviewed them in my last issue and my co-editor interviewed A-F. Some girl gets up before Strike Anywhere plays and starts talking in this very weepy, melodramatic voice about how her friends went to the West Bank and were under fire day and night and had to hide from snipers and feared for their lives, and so on. She paints this really sad picture and everyone in the audience was getting really upset. I really wanted to get up there and be like, "you know, there's two sides to every story. And the popular view isn't always the most accurate. Can we paint the other side of the picture too while we're here?" Do you know what I mean?

I agree, I think it's unfair of Strike Anywhere to give such a one-sided account of the situation, especially in such a complex, ancient, and deeply-rooted conflict. I mean, almost no other conflict along lines of ethnicity or religion is as deep or as old as the Jewish/Muslim conflict. It is detailed in the bible. So for a band to present the situation like is unfair, you're right.

**I think punk rock would love to paint one side of the story.**

Right now, at this very moment, the story is one-sided. You can't compare sixty guys on their stomachs in a church with no ammo fighting the mightiest military power in the region a two-way story. Jenin was really a turning point for the conflict because they showed they could be very very destructive. They are losing all moral high-ground for the time being in Jenin because of the immense destruction. The Israeli practice of bull-dozing homes in the way of their troops is horrific. My God, look

what the Jewish people have been through in the last few hundred years or the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone. Look at what they went through just to establish Israel as a country, fighting against overwhelming odds. The fact that they have the only democracy in the entire region, they're completely undermining that, and that is so sad.

**I completely agree with you.**

There definitely is another side to it, but right now while we're doing this interview it is unbalanced. And the saddest part is Israel is a better country and a better people than that. Imagine, if you will, that after 9/11 America had just gone in and leveled the entire nation of Afghanistan.

**They kind of did.**

Well, it was at least targeted and they were airlifting food and allowing medical attention. The stuff Israelis are doing right now is sad. We have to have the confidence in them to say, "you're great, but you're fucking up." There's also a difference between Afghanistan because the people there hated the Taliban. Palestinians just want the right to live in peace, and so do the Israelis, so that's why the conflict is so complicated. Sharon has been a huge problem there.

**He's such a jerk.**

Yeah, what he did in Lebanon in 1982 is astounding.

**Or 1953 in Palestinian territories. His election was the death of the peace process in my opinion.**

He's a hardline right-wing guy. Ross, people are going to be so bored reading this.

**Yeah, but I think this is one of the most interesting interviews I've ever done. Here I am talking to one of my musical heroes about a subject I care passionately about and that I am thrilled that you know as much as you do about it. Fuck my readers, this is a milestone for me.**

Oh me too, I'm glad we didn't have to talk about Bad Religion or All or something. Ross, this has been very informative. Thanks.

**Face photos by Colin Germain**

**Live shots by someone at Dischord**

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# FACE TO FACE



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# American Nightmare

by Jonah



I never thought I'd say this, but I don't really consider myself a "hardcore kid" anymore. I rarely go to shows, I stay clear of the mosh pits, and the only kickboxing I've seen lately has been Bruce Lee's "Enter the Dragon" (which you should definitely rent if you haven't seen it). I don't review as many hardcore CD's nowadays, but the ones I do review generally sound like the same recycled riffs, banal breakdowns, and "stabbed in the back" lyricism. Yawn. The first time I saw American Nightmare was last summer at Krazy Fest, but it wasn't until at the urging of a friend I requested a copy of their new full-length, *Background Music*, that I saw what all the hype was about. Musically, this shit is brutal. The vocals make sandpaper seem like baby powder, and the riffs are about twice as fast as most acts in the genre and ten times as devastating. While the band's roots are firmly planted in hardcore (sing-a-longs, breakdowns, etc) their music is heavier than most metal acts could ever aspire. Most of this has to do with the fact that American Nightmare are one of the tightest bands in recent memory—effortlessly switching between crunching riffs with a technical prowess usually attributed to math rockers. Then there are Wes Eisold's lyrics. A mix of extreme frustration and introspective musing, they are a refreshing blast of honesty in a time where Dashboard Confessional's refrigerator poetry is considered brilliant. While the lyrics focus around typical subject matter like lost loves and the streets of Eisold's hometown, lines like "two hour drives are two hours alone, but two hour drives are better than home," cut through the genre's machismo posing like a shiv at Rykers. What I find most ironic about American Nightmare is while musically they couldn't be on a further end of the punk spectrum, their songs are more "emo" than bands like New Found Glory could ever hope to be. Because this isn't predictable, and it's not always pretty—but neither is life.

**What were you doing before you were in American Nightmare? Were you in Boston?**

No, I moved to Boston to be in this band, actually. I was living in Portland, Maine and I was going to college there. I went for like three years and was miserable. I dropped out and wasn't doing anything, rarely went to class—it was just a waste of time. This came about to do with some friends so I just decided to do that. My dad was in the military my whole life. He actually just recently retired, so we moved pretty much every year or two; I moved from Germany to Maine to Boston.

**Were you in any bands before American Nightmare?**

No, not really. I mean I tried to do bands since 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but no band really did anything at all.

**So how'd you hook up with Tim [Cossar, guitarist]?**

Tim's originally from Maine. He went to high school there and moved to Boston for school and to do the Ten Yard Fight thing. So I just know him through high school and stuff.

**Were you writing lyrics before you were in the band?**

Yeah, I went to school to do something with English and just wasn't interested and was just being forced to do things with it. People are typically good at math or English and I was always miserable at anything besides English. I always liked to write.

**Were you writing your lyrics planning to put them to music or just writing to write?**

Definitely just writing. It had nothing to do with songs.

**A lot of your writing is very personal. Do you feel vulnerable getting on stage and singing these lyrics in front of people you don't know?**

Extremely vulnerable. I didn't put any thought into it when Tim gave me some songs and was just like "put lyrics to them." It didn't even occur to me that people are going to perceive them certain different ways, and along with that will come a perception of who you are. And you get odd looks and people come up to you and go, "are you okay?" "Yeah, I'm okay, why?" (laughter) I guess with music I'm really into, I take the lyrical content as everything that person is too. So I guess it makes sense in a way, but still, it's a bit awkward.

**So do people come up to you at shows and think they know you?**

Yeah, and that's cool. Music is there for people to relate to. If people want to have a genuine conversation about whatever topic they think I might know something about, that's awesome. That's communication, it's expression, and sometimes that's a rare thing to find.

**Are there any negative aspects to it? Like maybe you wrote a song and someone knows it's about them?**

That doesn't bother me as much. The only thing I personally don't like is there's certain lines in songs that I might mean at one point and don't necessarily mean it fucking twenty-five days into a tour. You know what I mean? I don't always believe in every single line. And sometimes I'm like, "Can we not play this song? I just feel stupid."

**How do you feel about when people ask you about specific lines and you have to explain where you were when you wrote it?**

Most interviews are like, "So what are your lyrics about?" Not that it's not worth it, but it doesn't make sense to describe every specific situation that was going on at a certain time. I'm always vague when it comes to describing what they're about because I think it's better to be vague—not to spoil anyone's perception of what they are or how they relate to them. It's not my job to explain what they are, technically they're written for me. I don't need to get into it that much.





I know you just told me how you didn't like talking about specific lines on the record, but...

No, it's fine.

The line in "Hearts" where you say, "Screaming gets you nothing so what's the point?" You just said the lyrics are written for yourself, but isn't part of this outlet so that other people can enjoy and relate?

Maybe that line is extreme frustration. I don't think we do this for other people, or I didn't think so, until every now and then you meet someone who it matters for them, so I'd be wrong to say it doesn't matter for them too. It [that line] also has to do with if we're a band and we have something we want to talk about, and all people are doing is just punching each other in the face while we play, it's like why? I like when people get into bands and have fun and go crazy, but if there's a point or message and it's not even being paid attention to by 85% of the crowd then it's just like, "WHAT?"

So how long ago did you move to Boston?

This summer it'll be three years.

There are a lot of references to Boston in the lyrics and I was wondering how you feel it's different from other cities you've lived in and how that environment has affected your writing.

I think New England in general has a certain feel to it, whether it be seasonal, or whatever. I was living in Maine which is the number one most depressing place to live. Literally, there's nothing to do, no one accomplishes anything there; people grow up in the same towns they live their whole lives in. So I think that sort of molded a part of me; as well as moving to Boston where I was still in the same mind frame as living in Maine for a while. And some of the references to Boston could be references to anywhere, regardless of where...if I was living in Cleveland I might be talking about Cleveland instead of Boston and use the same line. It just was a certain place and a certain time.

When I lived in Boston I used to go to shows at the Middle East and I just remember tons of fights at every single show I went to, that was the one thing that stuck out about Boston to me – it's so violent.

Yeah, like you said, those are the shows I grew up going to...maybe it has [affected me] and I'm not aware of it; maybe it shapes the kind of person you are if you keep going to shows and you kind of accept it. You think fighting is okay. I'm sure living here has a lot to do with the genre of hardcore that we choose to play. That's an interesting question.

Is it still like that today?

It's hard to tell. There's nowhere to have shows in Boston. Whereas if you go to a show every week, you'd see a million fights every week and you'd know what to expect. And there's a lot of kids our age who aren't there for anything else but to have fun. I think a lot of people have grown up or moved on or just thought about what they do. But it's still an intimidating city when you go to a show; I think it still is.

Do you ever stop the playing if things get too out of control?

We have. This is actually something we've been talking about amongst ourselves a lot lately. Some people think we're a band that encourages violence, and although that's not the case, I can see how it would look shitty. I know we played at the Knitting Factory during the Avail tour and there were a couple fights during the set, and after the first fight – it was at the end of a song – we stopped we're like is everything cool? "Everyone's like "yeah," and then a fight broke out at the end of our last song. And by the time we noticed there were like ten seconds left in the song so we were like "alright, we're just going to finish the song." But supposedly we promote violence and support it and encourage it – I just don't

understand how people...

Can hold you responsible?

Yeah. We don't encourage fighting or promote it.

But do you think that even if you're not directly encouraging it, the aggressive nature of your music lends itself to violence?

I think with music that is aggressive, people are gonna release themselves in different ways. You know, some people might just be fucking morons about it and feel the need to fight and that sucks. That's not why we're here, that's not what we're about. I think aggressiveness isn't fighting – playing the music that we play is not fighting, it's release. Music is supposed to represent who you are and we are playing fast songs and screaming. It's a release for us; it's who we are and that's not anything to do with fighting.

I recently interviewed Jim Ward from Sparta and while ATDI was notorious for stopping shows because of fighting. But he's not sure where his new band stands, because if there's 2,000 kids at a show and one kid is acting stupid, is it really worth ending the show?

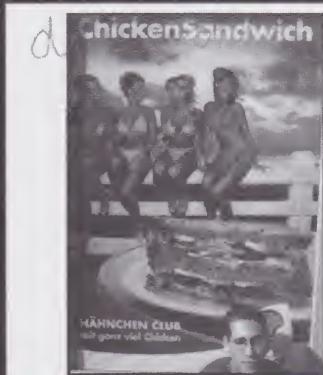
Yeah, we also talked about that. If there's a scuffle, do we stop and draw more attention to it and give the assholes all the attention they kind of want? Or do we just keep playing and ignore them? I guess it just depends on the situation. When we get criticized and called these things I think yes, we do have some responsibility. But I think it's everyone's responsibility. If there's something you don't like going on, I don't think we're the police officers of New York City and we're supposed to have control over everything that goes on during our set in New York City.

So what's next for you guys?

We leave actually Thursday – it's our first headlining tour – with Death Threat and Striking Distance. So we're nervous and curious and excited. We've toured straight for a year now, but it's always been support with bands that draw people, so we have no idea how we're gonna do. We've always had pretty fun shows, but we're curious to see how it's gonna work out.

Photos by Dale Rio and John McKaig





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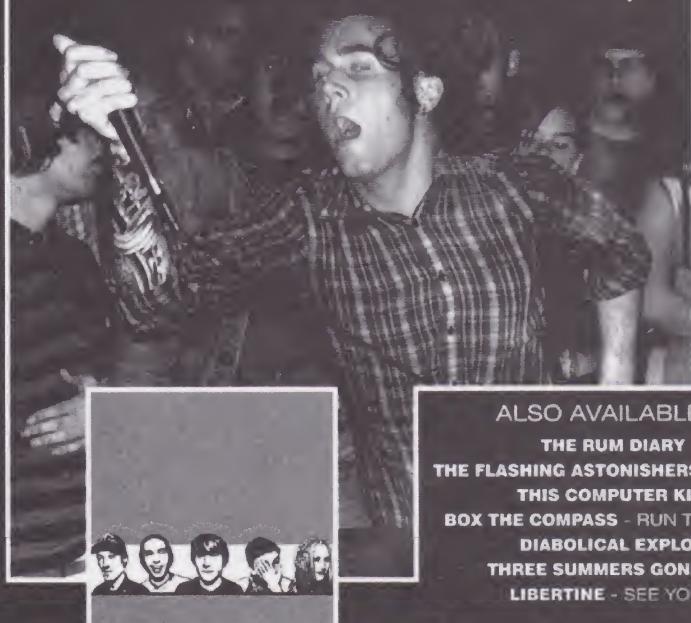


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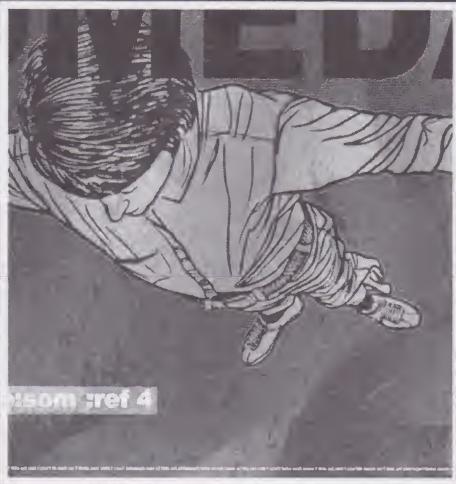
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# ALL-NIGHT BOWLING

BY JAKE FUTERNICK

4:33 p.m.

There is going to be a fight.

An after school fight at the JFK/UMASS T station, a fight that's going to leave a little black kid to pick himself off the ground and head for the exit, tears already spilling from his red-rimmed eyes. The prettiest 12-year-old girl of the group will follow, his friends who just stood around and watched him get kicked when he was down will straggle behind. A white woman will screech, "You should know better than that! You should be role models!" to the older kids who started the fight.

I will get on the T and go home, home after being up for 24 hours, most of that time spent at Boston Family Bowl, an all night bar, restaurant, pool hall, candlepin, and big-ball bowling alley home to senior bowling leagues, Asian gangsters, lonely insomniacs, fathers taking the afternoon off work to teach their sons how to play air hockey, retarded people on a field trip, and whatever else Dorchester, MA can conjure up between a Tuesday evening and a Wednesday afternoon.

9:30 a.m.

They're here. They finally fucking got here. Trailing their bowling balls in rolling suitcases behind them. It's 9:30 in the morning and the senior bowling league has finally showed up and two older ladies are either exchanging the normal old lady greetings or flirting heavily, I can't really tell.

"Hi Gordy."

"Ohhh, don't you look gorgeous this mornin'"

"I, ah... lost ten pounds!"

"Mmmm."

The chaos is over, everything is calm, slow, old-lady paced and right now there is no sound more relaxing than that of Brunswick pins being struck by 10 pound balls. Not the "soothing sound environments" crap you get at Brookstone's, not the songs of humpback whales, and definitely not the music of Amazon god-damned rainforest.

"See ya next week Betty. Make sure to bring ya bowlin' arm."

7:45 a.m.

"Can I ask you guys a question? Is my head moving like this?" asks Lea, one of the three girls I met earlier in the night, wiggling her finger back and forth. Well her finger is definitely wiggling, and so is her hand, and her arm, but her body is more trembling than wiggling, but no, no her head is not really moving at all.

"I feel like I'm on 10 million things that make my brain feel funny."

Your friends may be coming down from the mushrooms they took earlier, but you honey, you're just fucked up on not getting any sleep for three days and your head is not moving but your eyeballs are bouncing all over the place.

6:13 a.m.

The nausea. The nausea is the worst thing about being up all night. It comes in waves along with the overwhelming desire to crawl into bed and go to sleep. I can tell I'm hungry but the plate of Bickford's ham, eggs, toast, and hash browns in front of me is about the most disgusting thing I've ever seen.

My slice of ham has a metallic color to it, a coppery gold. There is fucking metal in my slice of ham and how the fuck am I going to eat this shit and make it through the entire day ahead of me. It's not even 7 o'clock in the morning and I can see the cars flying by on 93 South right outside the window but I cannot understand how these people could possibly be going to work right now. The last time I felt like this was coming back from a film shoot in New Hampshire at about the same time smoking a bowl with a midget still in costume from the night before, an oompah-loompah with an orange face and green hair passing me the pipe with his stubby little fingers. The oompah-loompah wasn't even what had me weirded out, I simply couldn't figure out how it got so damn bright out and why everything around me was moving so insanely fast.

5:00 a.m.

Strawberries. Big, ripe, red strawberries. Cold but not quite frozen and better tasting than the ones you get from the supermarket, growing from a thorny brown bush on the top of Savin Hill, in the middle of February. They don't make any sense but neither does anything else at this point in the evening, which





is now becoming morning behind a grayish-blue veil of clouds.

#### 4:38 a.m.

Rose has two dads. Two dads who share a dildo named "Big Pink." Lea used to pee in Margaret Wright's basement, and Amanda wants to know "if I miss any of the people I've ever slept with."

Brian, the late night cashier, is waiting for me back at the bowling alley, filling out paperwork and spraying disinfectant into the used bowling shoes, but I'm sorry Brian, I'm not going to make it back before seven like I told you. You don't have a car Brian, you don't want to drive me around Boston, Cambridge, and Dorchester for 6 hours, you are heavy and you may have bitch tits, but I'll take the real thing. We could probably hang out all night and share some stories but I doubt there will be the intimacy of hiding from the wind behind a rock on top of a hill sitting on the wet ground and getting that cold, clammy, itchy feeling on our asses telling very personal stories because either a: we've eaten a few mushrooms (Rose and Amanda), b: haven't slept for two days and can't go to sleep now because of a psychologist appointment the next afternoon (Lea), or c: consumed 4 Red Bulls, a fifth of Jim Beam, and still have 12 more hours to spend at a bowling alley (myself).

#### 3:20 a.m.

My friends are gone, the net under the tightrope of sanity I'll be walking tonight has been removed, I'm riding bareback from here on out. I bowl

slowly, methodically, and by myself. I'm on the phone with my best friend in California, bowling with one hand, phone in the other.

"I just picked up a spare and three girls just walked by," I tell my friend, "I really got to go."

"All right, later 'bro."

"Later."

I've been waiting to meet some new people ever since my friends left but I don't know how good of an idea it is to approach the Asian gangsters bowling next to me. The girls that just walked by seem interesting enough, so before I know it I've started up a conversation, jumped in on their game, and begun passing the bottle of whiskey around.

If you don't take bowling seriously, and you're drinking at a bowling alley (which usually happens when you don't take bowling seriously (or even if you do), I don't think it's possible to bowl and not start throwing two balls at once, maybe even three. I also think that it's impossible to do this without at least one time throwing one ball too late, and once you throw it too late you know what's going to happen.

SMACK!

Right off that little Brunswick thing that comes down and sweeps the pins away. And then maybe you throw another ball, a gutter ball this time, and you hope it will knock both balls in but of course it doesn't work and the guy has to come out, the guy who comes out every night and fetches the stranded bowling ball for the drunk kids bowling in the corner.

#### 1:41 a.m.

"I am wee Todd did. I am sofa king wee Todd did!"

He's perfect. The perfect Dorchester accent, reading off the piece of paper that we give him, yelling at the top of his lungs at Up's and Down's, the bar my friends and I have found to grab a few drinks before they drop me off at the bowling alley and leave me there by myself for the night. And that's where I feel this night is going, I can feel that things just might get wee Todd did.

#### 10:25 p.m.

What a Massachussettes problem. Here I am with all the time in the world, 24 full hours to kill, and I'm on a mad cap mission to find a liquor store by 11. Otherwise it's 4 dollar bottles of Corona from the bar at the bowling alley that's only open until midnight.

Apparently in Dorchester you can get alcohol at the drug store. So my roommate Mark and I get in his car and head down the road to Walgreen's. Get there, it closed at 10. "There's an open liquor store on Neponset," the Walgreen's lady tells us. Shady directions follow. Directions that even in the middle of getting them, you know you're never going to find it. Leave, get lost, ask for Neponset, get lost, find a gas station. Closed. Stay lost, ask again at a pizza joint, the pizza guy draws me a map on the counter top with the grease on his fingers, find Neponset. No liquor store in sight, settle on a convenience store. "...liquor store, I don't know about liquor store," says the foreign guy behind the counter. Who comes to the rescue when it's 10:45 and you're trying to find a Paddy? A Massachusetts State Police Officer of course. "Just up the street on the right." So we jump in Mark's car, the one still damaged from when he drank drove into the median of Storrow Drive, but we still can't find the liquor store. It's on to Up's and Down's, an "only in Dorchester" type place, at least a 5 to 1 ratio of guys to girls with the happiest bartender I've ever met to give directions. 10:52 by now. "Open until 11 o'clock. On the dot!" Steps outside, "follow this guard rail," he says. Slap! Slap! On the metal rail. Walks with me to the car, still elaborating on his directions. Of course I screw them up. "I don't see the Wendy's," I tell Mark, "he was very clear about the liquor store being next to the Wendy's." It's got to be just over this hill and then, Ka-Chunk! Car dies. There's a reason that Mark hasn't driven the car since the accident and it's not just the parking spot he had right outside our apartment, his car is fucked. It's already a minor miracle the car even made it this far. 10:56. Car starts fine, throw it into drive, dies. Starts, dies. Starts, dies. 10:58. Starts, goes. A miracle. 50 feet over the hill is a liquor store, not the liquor store but a liquor store. Jump out of a moving car. Run. Hand is on the chord to turn off the light on the Budweiser sign. 10:59. Door is unlocked. God-damned miracle. Get a bottle of whiskey. Celebratory swig. Drive back to the bowling alley. Car dies. Swear profusely. Car starts. Fuckin' miracle.

Park. Drink. Bowl...

# The Recooling of Rage

by Mike Ski

The end of the Baby Boomers has seen the phenomenon of Generation X, a generation vexed and perplexed, searching for a historical context. What began as sincere and heartfelt angst of an entire generation confused and angry over its place in history, or lack thereof, brought new sights, sounds, and ideas to a stagnant culture. As Zach De La Rocha of Rage Against the Machine proclaimed... "Anger is a Gift." Despite my ability to rhyme well, I'm no prophet or poet. I'm just a regular pissed off 16 year old kid trapped in a 28 year old's life.

It has often been noted by the more observation-prone individuals in my life that for such a "nice guy," I am awfully pissed off much of the time. On any given occasion I might tear off on a tangent with a string of "fucking fucks" following and preceding few nouns in a sentence. It becomes almost like a broken record, yet I somehow just can't come to terms with such fascinating topics such as:

*"If I don't have a quarter or the parking meter right now, what makes them think I'll have fifty-five dollars to pay the ticket they give me for parking here tomorrow?"*

Realistically, this is far from the fire that sets off revolutions, but there is something important attached to the act of getting angry that is often overlooked. I always looked at it like this... anger isn't a solution to any given problem, but it can be the beginning of taking steps towards working out a solution. If it doesn't piss you off in the first place, more than likely it's not a problem at all, or is it?

There has always been a sort of "youthful" quality that has been associated with being ill-content with things around us. It was this same embracing of "teen angst" that attracted me to punk rock and hardcore music. I remember the time like it was yesterday when more "mature"

bands began referring to themselves as "post-hardcore" to distance themselves from the poopy pants youngsters still throwing tantrums about the usual shit and it made me fucking furious. I took it as direct insult. I didn't understand why it was becoming hip to not want to scream and smash shit in punk rock. Maybe the most embarrassing thing about it is, years later, I'm still mad about it. And even more so, I'm mad that I'm embarrassed about being mad about it.

The Definition of "Emo-Core" in The "Crucial Youth Comix" 1988: EMO-CORE "Mature" music made by cigarette-puffing ex-straightedges. Heavy on soul searching, hard to mosh to."

Admittedly ridiculous, you gotta laugh just a little cuz you know it's kinda true. It scared me because I always saw the punk/hardcore lifestyle as a mini-model for the rest of the world. I feared the devaluing of being angry around me as an eerie premonition of what was to come in the world outside the doors of the local punk rock show. It's become so cliche for people to become passionate about something for a couple years and then fizzle out. It's the reason everything that could be important just seems like background noise anymore. The "blah, blah, blah..." of music, art, and information. The same reason so many people would rather say "We just want to have fun... we don't care." The irony of it all is when it's considered more mature to be apathetic and seemingly young and dumb to care about things.

*"The Revolutionary class is every kid that's pissed off. You're just not going to get old people involved, they've got too much to lose. Young people have got no fear. When you fear nothing, you can do anything." -Nicky Wire of the Manic Street Preachers*

I never knew if what I felt as a human and expressed through my work as a musician was "so 2 years ago" or if it was indeed a warning shot... the last line of defense in a scene teetering on the brink. What I did know was that the harder I tried to get through all the noise, the more I just felt like a big dumb kid. No one wants to hear about it. All the young revolutionaries have come to rest on the couch learning how to kick ass at Sega Genesis 54 Gamegear Cube things. I know 20 year old kids who can't afford to drop their lame, unchallenging jobs because they've got 5000 dollars of credit card debt. Trapped in a dead end

rut with everything to fear before our times. Our fires are dying so early. In New York City, I find it increasingly more "convenient" to ride the train using Metro Cards I can buy in a handy machine with the swipe of my Visa Card. Stations are frequently "Metro Card Only." The cash machines are always broken. I need to work a shitty job where I have little or no opportunities for my own growth as a human being to pay my credit card bills so I can do something as simple as get from point A to point B. I don't mean to sound "paranoid," but am I the only one who quietly worries about what's down the road? Every single human being becoming increasingly dependent on the very things that extinguish our prospects for individual freedoms as people? Okay, I'm pissed...

*"Anyone in the United States today who isn't paranoid must be crazy." -Robert Anton Wilson*

So I've successfully blamed the devaluing of anger and the dead spark of a generation of failed revolution on a mysterious plot by unseen hands. Well, not really. Believe it or not, I think it's our own fault. The products of Generation X are almost by definition free from responsibility. Maybe that's all we need is to take some. The primary instinct of our culture is to seek, deliver, and apply the most convenient and "versatile solutions for modern living" in our daily life "challenges." We crave the easy road, we NEED the easy road. We devour our own demise because it is sold to us as our savior, and everyone wants to be saved. It's a hard sell to explain to someone that we've been running on empty this entire time, and the only reason we're still picking up speed is because we're heading downhill so fucking fast.

*"People are strange, they are constantly angered by trivial things. But on a major matter like totally wasting their lives, they hardly seem to notice." -Charles Bukowski*

If it doesn't piss you off in the first place, more than likely it's not a problem at all, right? Are you bored? Are you empty? Are you challenged? Do you feel alive? For a lot of us, we've already laid our guns on the ground and accepted our fates... become content with our surroundings and even worse... we've become comfortable. We don't want to get wet, dirty, hot, cold, hungry, and our greatest fear... we don't want to be inconvenienced. So, we don't. We've solved all our problems with technological wonders and a thrilling lack of human experience. The infamous angst of Generation X sadly lives on as a way to market Doritos and Skateboards, serving as a dusty museum to visitors like walking dead. In the end, it is still our own choice. No matter how juvenile it sounds... I still feel like a fucking warrior. Still pissed, raised fist. The thing that makes me the most angry is the fact that no one else seems to be angry, so I've got fuel for eternal fire. I'll be motherfucking still pissed with a raised fist when I'm 50 years old, if I'm not already dead by then. Anyone want to tag along?

*"Rage drives revolutions." -Kalle Lasne*



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# GLASS JAW

by ROSS



I first encountered The Glassjaw at a festival put on by the late Wreck-age Records in 1998, shortly after I started *Law of Inertia*. I wasn't expecting much from the opening bands. La Magna and The Judas Factor weren't really what I was looking for on that sweltering summer afternoon at Coney Island High in New York City. The Glassjaw were the first band to take the stage and I was surprised at how many kids had braved the club's heat and shown up early for the least-known band of the day. Even after watching the band for five minutes I could tell they had something very very special. Their singer, Darryl Palumbo, had his rock star moves down-pat. The sheer charisma he displayed on stage for only twenty minutes far surpassed anyone that day, including the infamous Artie Phillip. I watched in awe as the band powered their way through seven hardcore onslaughts before I walked promptly over to the merch booth to purchase their demo CD released on Two Cents a Pop Records (if you want a copy of this CD in its original packaging talk to Kneel Rubenstein, he has a bunch and is saving them to sell on E-bay for a fortune). I originally came to the show to interview Silent Majority, a band that also put on a jaw-dropping show that day, but decided that it might be a good idea to interview the already-established Long Island superhero act with a lesser known act with whom they shared members. Thus came an interesting interview in our third issue with both bands.

Fast forward four years to 2002. Every single band that played that festival has broken up (Indecision simply changed their name to Most Precious Blood) save The Glassjaw who are set to take over the world. Their new record, *Worship and Tribute*, will be out shortly on Warner Bros., and The Glassjaw are already receiving healthy amounts of attention even outside the New York area. And they deserve it too. The sheer talent in this band surpasses any other band in hardcore. The amount of subtlety and nuance found in each Glassjaw song is unheard of elsewhere in aggressive rock and roll. And I am the first one in line to sing Glassjaw's praises.

I have become better friends with some of the people I met at that festival four years ago. Some of the names mentioned in the interview I did in issue #3 that were foreign to me at the time are now on my AOL buddy list or in my speed-dial. And, I've gotten to know Darryl a bit better and see that the charisma and energy is still there. Darryl might be the most verbose, frenetic interviewee ever to appear in these pages. But, it's fine, because it all makes for a great show in the end.

*[We're talking about Warner Bros., Glassjaw's new home]*

Roadrunner Records are the slimiest bunch of people ever. They treat their bands like shit, like they aren't people, like they're just workers who make stuff to be sold and then when the records are sold the band can't get in touch with the label to save

their lives. We are so happy to be on Warner Brothers and off of Roadrunner. Sure, we're on the biggest record label in the world which may not be as true to our roots as some, but the people at Warner Brothers are not only cool people who care about getting our music out there to the most people possible, they're also people that we like to think care about us as people and not as drones. I urge anyone who reads this article to completely boycott Roadrunner if they have any love of honest and sound business morals and if they care at all about the bands on the label. Slipknot—who are great friends of ours—feel the exact same way. Those guys are one of the best bands in the world no matter what the hardcore community generally thinks.

**I agree, I think they're one of the few metal bands these days that is truly doing something different. It's too bad because the hardcore community sees them as more of a gimmick than a creative powerhouse.**

True, and those guys work their asses off and get little to nothing from Roadrunner. They put on one of the best shows you'll ever fucking see and they deserve so much better than they're getting. I'm even going to go as far to say that I urge everyone who likes us and has seen us before to please please not buy the reissue of our first record that is being re-released on Roadrunner. Please don't buy anything from them, much less something with our name on it. We want to drive those fuckers out of business.

**I'll be sure to make a note of that Darryl.**

Thank you.

**You must have pretty strong feelings if you're telling people not to even buy your record.**

We do, we hate them so much. They totally are the worst people ever.

**Moving right along, I know you are very very big on pumping your friends' bands. I know you are very close with a lot of the Long Island bands. It may sound like a stupid question but why do you make such an effort to support your friends?**

It's not a stupid question because anyone that knows me knows that I was so inspired by the other bands from Long Island that were around when I was growing up. Bands like Silent Majority, Irony of Lightfoot, Sons of Abraham, Glassjaw, Movielife—I was raised playing in and listening to those bands. Our crew was the Lost in Space crew and of that group only Movielife is still around. And, even though I'm generally not into pop music the Movielife are one of the best bands around today and one of the best bands from Long Island ever. Their new stuff is head and shoulders above most of the music coming out of the punk scene these days—even for pop music. But, my love for those bands that I grew up with and played so many shows with is like someone who grew up in the 1960's love for the Beatles. Seeing Silent Majority play or Kneel Rubenstein of Sons sing was the best feeling in the fucking world. I've been doing Glassjaw since I was 13, and I'm 23 now. Most of those guys in those bands are way older than me but seriously, they taught me more about music than any other group of kids in the world. They also taught me about straight-edge and how important it is, and they're the reason I'll be straight-edge until the day I die. When other kids in high school were going to football games and parties, I was playing shows with the best musical acts in the world. So, when you ask me why I talk about those bands so much in interviews, well, it's like mentioning your best friends—friends you're totally in awe of—to another friend. I'm just trying to give bands like Silent Majority or Sons of Abraham the due that they never got.

**I'm also curious as to why you thanked the singers who**

**influenced you on your first record in your thanks list.**

Well, it's a direct relation to the name of our new record dropping soon. The name *Worship and Tribute* is an homage to the musicians and bands that inspired us. I know it's cool to be into Faith No More and Bad Brains again but I seriously learned and stole more from those two singers than any others, except for maybe Robert Smith of the Cure. I learned that you don't need to be loud and you don't need to scream all the time to be emotional or even heavy. Also, I learned that variation and differing textures are good to have in a song. So, when I was learning to sing I tried to infuse a mixture of those three singers, their lyrics, and their assets. When you think about it, Mike Patton's style with Faith No More really wasn't a whole lot different than HR's work with Bad Brains. They both had similar styles which really set them apart from the rest of the hardcore, punk, or alternative communities.

**Do people say you bite their styles?**

Yes all the time, which is unfair since Glassjaw really isn't anything like Bad Brains or Faith No More.

**I actually just saw Mos Def play with Dr. Know [of the Bad Brains] on guitar. It was pretty incredible.**

Yeah, Mos Def has been touring with Dr. Know for a while now.

**Have you heard that song "Rock and Roll" off *Black on Both Sides* where Mos Def sings about loving Fishbone and Bad Brains?**

Yeah, I think that song is humorous to say the least. It is a statement that Mos Def has Dr. Know playing guitar in his band but I wonder exactly what that statement is.

**You think he's trying get Dr. Know to lend him underground credibility?**

No, not really. You see, hip-hop is really important to me. These days it's pretty much all I listen to and I truly believe it is the last important and vital musical form there is. The urban drama of the songs of rap-crews like the Weathermen blow away anything in the hardcore scene as far as passion, danger, and urgency. Hip-hop to me is real music whereas these days hardcore is what I play and what I love but not what I listen to when I'm in my room.

**Do you not see hardcore as vital as it used to be?**

Well, no I still see hardcore as vital. Of course I do, I play in a hardcore band. But it just seems that I'm not as excited about hardcore as I was when I was thirteen. Now there are so many bands doing the same things. There are so many bands trying to sound like Slayer and not enough diversity and uniqueness in the scene. To me rap is just a bit more vital these days. Hip-hop is a bit more interesting, there's more people doing it so there's more diversity as far as sounds and styles, and the lyrical content of hip-hop goes far beyond anything happening in the hardcore scene. Hardcore is being recycled a lot right now and I doubt I'll be as excited again by hardcore as I was when I first saw Silent Majority or something. Of course there are a lot of indie bands I really love. J Majesty is one of the most amazing bands ever—the things that band does in their new record dropping on Some Records soon are far beyond anything else going on in indie rock these days. I hope to play with them, and I hope to play in them, very soon. We'll see.

**Darryl, on another subject I'm sure you're aware of all the criticism of your music and how it dealt with females in the past.**

What? What are you talking about? People don't like the way I sang about girls? (laughter) No seriously, I'm fully aware, even if I were deaf I still would know that people weren't thrilled with me and how I described a certain woman in my life.

**The nice people at Warner Brothers didn't think to throw a lyric sheet into my copy of the new record, but it seems that you're far less concerned with hating women, or a certain woman, than in the past.**

Yes, you're right. In all fairness, I made a mistake and for that I'm sorry. I used some words and made some descriptions that were unfair and cruel and for that I want to apologize for the millionth time to anyone who is still pissed.

**Has your entire attitude towards women changed or are you just trying to save face?**

I know it sounds hard to believe, but my entire attitude towards women in my life when I wrote those songs was a pretty negative one and I have since reconciled my feelings on how I choose to treat women and how I write about them. Ross, you know me, I'm not a violent person at all and I generally tend to be very accepting of other people. In my defense, I was 18 when I wrote those songs and I've learned a lot and been a lot of places since I wrote those songs. I led a sheltered life up until then and I honestly have climbed out of my shell in the past 4 or 5 years. I totally realize that the way I spoke of a certain woman on that record was wrong and for that I am sorry. But when we wrote those songs I truly did not think anyone would care. We hadn't been contacted by Ross Robinson or Roadrunner. Until that point and we were basically playing in Glassjaw when we weren't playing in our other bands. We had no idea

that we'd be going on tour for a year all over the world, much less a few months with the fucking Deftones. I wrote those songs with Beck and didn't think anyone would hear them so I didn't consider my actions as much as I should have. Now, one can say to me that that's still not good enough and I should have had foresight, but up until that point Glassjaw wasn't even worth considering as a huge band. It was sort of an accident that we have gotten to this point, so you really can't fault me on lack of foresight. Right now when I write music I'm past what I wrote about before and I think the music is more intense because of it.

**Yeah, the new record really is much harder than the last one. It's more thought out as well, but in a very subtle way.**

Thanks! That's so good to hear. The record isn't out yet so not many people have heard it yet and it's great to hear that people like it.

Yes, I love it. I think there's one section on the 9th song, "Cavalcade," that blows me away every single time I listen to it. It's that part where you describe a race between your heart, your mind, and your soul.

You just like that because it's me being silly for a change.

No seriously, I think that is the apex of the creative vision that Glassjaw has shown thus far. It is silly and fun yet at the same time the level of emotion conveyed in that thirty-second part, that might as well be a horse-race, far surpasses all your other stuff and almost every other song by every other band out there.

Wow, that's great to hear.

**What prompted you to write that part?**

Well, it started off as just sort of a joke to lighten the mood on what I think is the heaviest song on the record emotionally speaking. But then as it became more and more fleshed out we realized how powerful it was and we gave it a substantial amount of attention in the recording process.

**Why a race between the heart, mind, and soul?**

I think those are the three parts of me that are constantly vying for the lead in sort of eternal race. It is always important for to have my heart come first out of the three of them. I want my passion and emotion to always come before rational. It just seemed like an appropriate venue to showcase the conflict between them to put them in a race setting. And, of course the heart wins in my ideal vision. The ABC Wide World of Sports thing is sort of like the rest of the world, or at least the people in my life, watching on as I have this battle with myself. Like I'm on display for the whole world to see. It's not as arrogant as it sounds, I think everyone does the same thing I do.

**You articulated that dialectic better than you know, I think.**

Maybe I did. That's nice of you to say. I was definitely on point for at least a brief part of the new record. (laughter)

**You know, it's funny that we're talking about a holy trinity of the heart, mind, and soul. Are you Catholic?**

Yes, I was raised and I am Catholic.

**Does that Catholic view affect your music at all?**

I see what you're getting at, and this

isn't the first time I've been asked that, but just so I can hear another opinion, why do you ask?

**It's everything from you talking about raising the dead on your demo CD to the guilt you seem to harbor surrounding sex—both your sex and the sex of others—to this holy trinity to the way you deal with regret. It all seems so fitting for the Catholic outlook on spirituality and the world.**

That is very astute of you, Ross. You're on point. I definitely think I've been shaped by Catholicism. Whether it was my choice to remain a virgin for twenty-two years or simply the way I deal with guilt, I think I'm a Catholic through and through and I guess it comes out in my music. I think what's even more apparent about my religion and how it comes out in my music is in the culture of Catholicism rather than the mechanical practices of going to Church or something. I bare all in my music. Most people are perfectly aware that I was a virgin for so long just from listening to my lyrics. Also, I don't try to cover anything up when I write, and that often gets me into a lot of trouble. I tell it like it is, which honestly most people in hardcore don't have the guts to do. I used words like "bitch" and "whore" on the first record and that is far closer to hip-hop than hardcore.

**Is that a good thing or a bad thing?**

Neither at all. It's just a difference in how the two cultures deal with ideas like promiscuity and male-female relations and stuff. Hip-hop just doesn't try to pull punches, for better or worse, which I appreciate. Maybe MCs don't think before they speak and therefore their lyrics are more blunt or more honest, but hardcore seems contrived in that way. Plus, hardcore often dictates that there is no God and that religion is a waste of time. I disagree. I think spirituality is key and that gets us back to the struggle within myself. I'm always fighting to see which is in the lead and which is more important to my well being—assuming they're all healthy, which they are not.

**I agree, I think the way you deal with spirituality is more honest than most singers in aggressive rock and roll. At the very least because most bands don't deal with it at all.**

You're someone that's always gotten Glassjaw, Ross. I remember when we met at the Wreck-age fest—what was that, four years ago?—you seemed like you understood us then and I think that was the first time you ever heard us, right?

**Yes, I was blown away. You played that song "The Snow Veil" which is an incredible**

**hardcore anthem.**

Yeah, we were the underdog, opening for some of the best hardcore bands ever like Indecision, Milhouse, Sons of Abraham, and Silent Majority, and you chose to interview us. What was that, like your second issue? **You guys appeared in the third. You and Cursive are the only two bands to ever appear twice in Law of Inertia.**

And that means a lot. You've seen us grow whether you realize it or not. The people at the bigger magazines, they may like us and they may think we will be the next big thing, but if we're still playing in five or ten years it'll be to the people who understand what we're about and who we are—no matter how poorly we articulate it—rather than the kids who just like us 'cause we're

loud.

**Photos by Ross**

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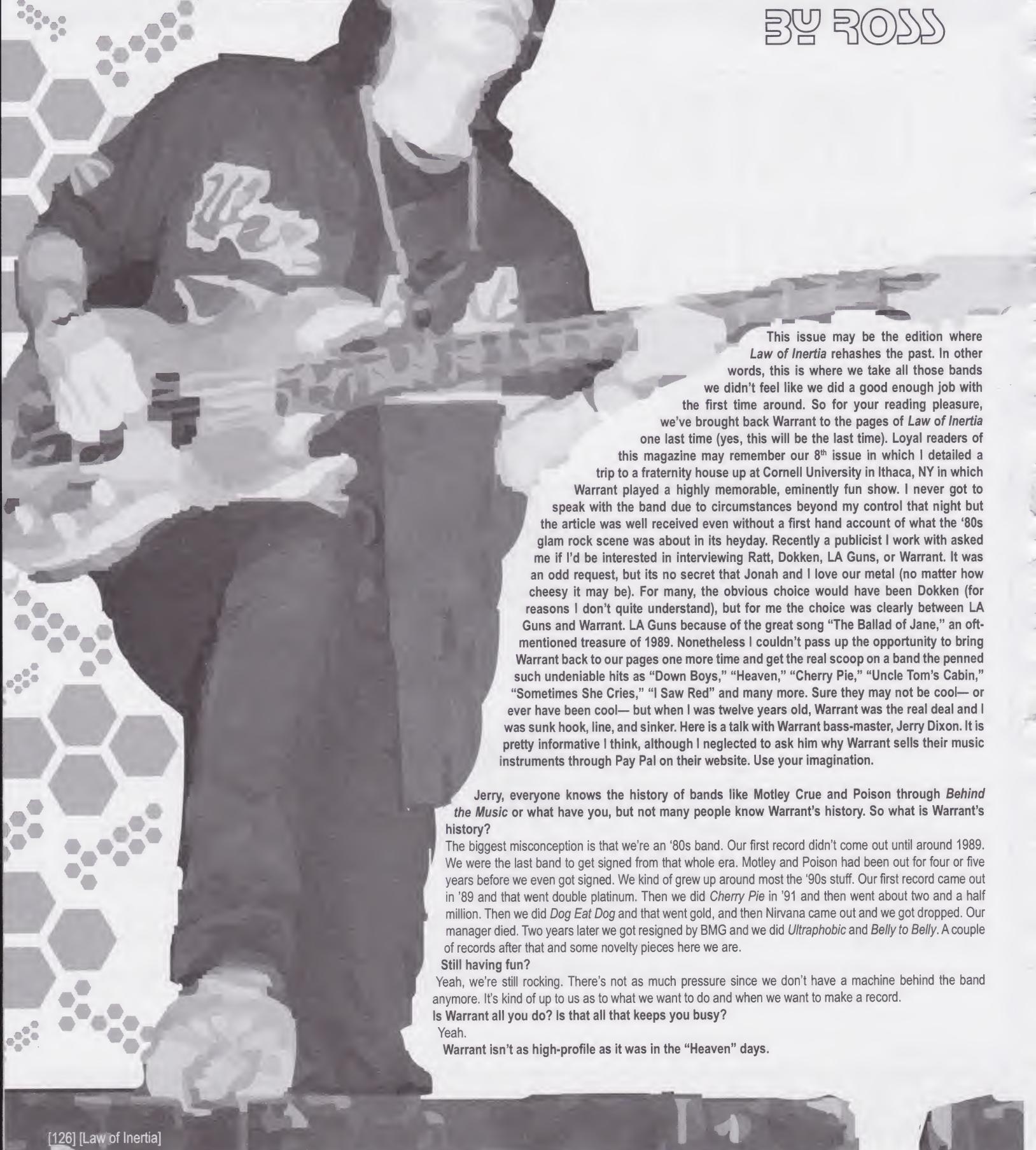
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PRINTING AND DESIGN FOR INDEPENDENT RECORD LABELS AND BANDS SINCE 1994

# WARRANT

BY ROSS



This issue may be the edition where *Law of Inertia* rehashes the past. In other words, this is where we take all those bands we didn't feel like we did a good enough job with the first time around. So for your reading pleasure, we've brought back Warrant to the pages of *Law of Inertia* one last time (yes, this will be the last time). Loyal readers of this magazine may remember our 8<sup>th</sup> issue in which I detailed a trip to a fraternity house up at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY in which Warrant played a highly memorable, eminently fun show. I never got to speak with the band due to circumstances beyond my control that night but the article was well received even without a first hand account of what the '80s glam rock scene was about in its heyday. Recently a publicist I work with asked me if I'd be interested in interviewing Ratt, Dokken, LA Guns, or Warrant. It was an odd request, but its no secret that Jonah and I love our metal (no matter how cheesy it may be). For many, the obvious choice would have been Dokken (for reasons I don't quite understand), but for me the choice was clearly between LA Guns and Warrant. LA Guns because of the great song "The Ballad of Jane," an oft-mentioned treasure of 1989. Nonetheless I couldn't pass up the opportunity to bring Warrant back to our pages one more time and get the real scoop on a band the penned such undeniable hits as "Down Boys," "Heaven," "Cherry Pie," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Sometimes She Cries," "I Saw Red" and many more. Sure they may not be cool—or ever have been cool—but when I was twelve years old, Warrant was the real deal and I was sunk hook, line, and sinker. Here is a talk with Warrant bass-master, Jerry Dixon. It is pretty informative I think, although I neglected to ask him why Warrant sells their music instruments through Pay Pal on their website. Use your imagination.

Jerry, everyone knows the history of bands like Motley Crue and Poison through *Behind the Music* or what have you, but not many people know Warrant's history. So what is Warrant's history?

The biggest misconception is that we're an '80s band. Our first record didn't come out until around 1989. We were the last band to get signed from that whole era. Motley and Poison had been out for four or five years before we even got signed. We kind of grew up around most the '90s stuff. Our first record came out in '89 and that went double platinum. Then we did *Cherry Pie* in '91 and then went about two and a half million. Then we did *Dog Eat Dog* and that went gold, and then Nirvana came out and we got dropped. Our manager died. Two years later we got resigned by BMG and we did *Ultrapathic* and *Belly to Belly*. A couple of records after that and some novelty pieces here we are.

**Still having fun?**

Yeah, we're still rocking. There's not as much pressure since we don't have a machine behind the band anymore. It's kind of up to us as to what we want to do and when we want to make a record.

**Is Warrant all you do? Is that all that keeps you busy?**

Yeah.

Warrant isn't as high-profile as it was in the "Heaven" days.

Yeah, but we still do pretty well. We make most of our living off our live shows.

**I saw you at Cornell University a few years ago.**

Oh that was the one at the frat house. Yeah, that was a good time! We had a fun night

**We were talking about that for the next year.**

You guys gotta have us back.

**Well, I graduated. So are you on tour most of the year?**

We tour the whole summer in these big package metal tours usually. Then we do certain dates the rest of the year when our agent suggests it. There's radio stations that have us on their shows for big parties or something. What we end up doing is two or three road trips every month.

**It's funny because right around the time Green Day or Nirvana came out if you had told someone that you were into Warrant or even Gun N Roses people would look and you and say, "dude, what a loser you are." Now rock and roll is back and I see people wearing your shirts or patches in New York City every once in a while. What do you think of that since you're back in style?**

We finally got old enough to be cool again. We got a lot of shit for a while. No one did anything mean to us but the media didn't really listen to what we did after *Cherry Pie*. You really have no right to do an interview sometimes if you haven't done your homework. We've had some good solid records there that deserve a listen. That's one thing about Warrant, we've always had good music. At the end of the day people can make fun of your hair and shit but when it comes down to it our music was good stuff.

Your publicist approached me with the chance to interview LA Guns, Dokken, or Ratt, and I chose you guys. I was and am a huge Warrant fan. You listen to songs like "**Downboys**" or "**Heaven**" and they are good songs. How does it feel when most of your contemporaries aren't being taken seriously?

I think that what the deal was was that era was kind of a way of life. People either got into it or they didn't... people either accepted it or they didn't. Those of us who enjoyed it had a hell of a good time. If people got it then great, if not well whatever.

**Jerry can you tell me a crazy groupie story? Something that would never happen today?**

There's still tons of stuff that happen... all the time. All that stuff still goes on.

We were out of control around the time of the first record. I think when the money started coming in and the album sales were good it was just a blur, you know? We enjoyed everything to the fullest extent.

**Like in a *Behind the Music* episode with the booze, the money, then the decline?**

Nah, those stories bum me out. We still do pretty well, and we still enjoy ourselves. We're pretty sober now, but c'mon [screamed], we like that aspect of it. Like anything the buzz can kick your ass, and for a while there we lived the high life. We've toned it down a bit but there are still some crazy times to be had and we're having them every time we step on stage.

**What are your thoughts on the music that is super popular today, like Limp Bizkit or rap-metal stuff?**

I like 311, I dig that band. Limp Bizkit's fucking awesome. They do what they do very well. The only thing that's lacking is that there's no more rockstars. You hear that band Nickelback, what is the singer's name? I'm sure no one knows what the singer of most of the bands they listen to these days is, and that's because there's no more personalities... no more rockstars.

**Well, Fred Durst is doing all right for himself.**

Oh he's kicking ass. He's kind of like an Axl Rose figure that everyone knows. I grew up on heavier music anyway so I like a lot of the heavy music today. I would listen to everything from Queen to Black Sabbath. I listed to heavy stuff like Maiden. I liked Dio and Ozzy and metal, which is the roots of Warrant.

**Do the rest of the guys like that stuff?**

Well, Erik is like me, he's a hesher. Lane grew up on more of the Bad Company, Beatles type stuff, like singer-songwriter stuff. [long pause]

**Cool. What advice would you give to a guy like Fred Durst if you could talk to him?**

I don't think he need any advice. I think he's doing a good job.

**You wouldn't tell him to put all his money into a trust account or something? Don't hit the booze too hard.**

I would tell him to have fun! Go crazy while you're young. I guess the best advice to give anybody would be it's your life and your career. Surround yourself with good people as there are a lot of crooked people out there that wouldn't mind taking advantage of you. Keep people you trust around you. It's all a loan, remember that. It's a big loan that needs to be paid back one day. But, with that said, have fun and go wild!

**During the Cornell show you guys played a Lit song. Are you guys really good friends with them?**

They're an '80s band, they started back then. They were called The Razzle and we've known them for a long time. I think they knew Jani or something, but there our pals. They were just an '80s band and disguised themselves and changed their sound, and made it through the cracks of the label world and did what they had to do to survive. God bless 'em! Changing their image is tough and they're great?

**They don't mind you covering their songs?**

No, they love us. We were big when they were starting out, so they see it as an homage.

**How has the LA scene changed since you first came into it? Is the climate for bands any different?**

Yeah, it's totally different. We used to know people all over the Sunset Strip. People were partying non-stop and bands worked hard every night even when they weren't playing. Bands passed out flyers or went places to meet



people that could help them. It's not like that anymore. It's a lot more formal and less personal, I think. Today all the clubs are roped off and there's lines down the block to get in to them. They want to make it look like it's formal. It was crazy back then, it was a party. I think slowly the gaps for bands to just play and impress people is closing. Now they make bands sell tickets and do things before they can even show off their music. It kind of hinders new artists which is really the life's blood of rock music. LA used to be a place where people from all over the world would move here to get discovered, and that's really not the case anymore. If you can't sell tickets to get people in then you can't play! [laughter] It gets to be really watered down.

**How do you guys fit into that whole scene?**

Well, we never really did that. We made it out of here... got out of jail before the riot. We never had to sell tickets or anything, that happened after we got signed.

**So when you guys make a record, is it a pretty do it yourself type thing?**

Pardon me?

**In other words, when you guys make a record do you do all the production work yourself—recording, producing, engineering, etc.—artwork, and stuff like that?**

Yeah, now we do. We've got some great people we work with but it's not like before where we had people wiping or ass for us. With the bands of our era, some of them manage themselves now. We do it all, artwork, website, setting up interviews.

**How do you feel about that?**

I think it's good. At the end of the day you feel better, you feel good about working hard and what you've done. It's a lot more rewarding, than, "guys you have an interview Friday with Circus!" [said in a whiney female voice, laughter]

**I'm curious as to something: whatever happened to Bobbie Brown?**

People ask me this all the time and I don't think they realize that even though she was the infamous, beloved babe in the "Cherry Pie" video, she was also married to Jani for a while. They have a daughter together, actually. If you have enough money she's probably living in LA.

**Huh. You guys don't still talk to her?**

No, she's cool dude. I never see her, but Jani tells me about her because of their daughter.

**One last question: where will the members of Warrant be in ten years from now? Realistically speaking.**

We'll be doing seven nights at the Rose Room in Vegas dude! [laughter]

**Opening for Wayne Newton?**

Yeah! That's awesome. No, to be honest I think about that all the time, like, "what do I do if this fails?" I think Warrant is still viable. There's bands like Skynard still playing and people still like it. I think we might eventually turn into that band. They play fifty shows a year and make great money. So I think that's in the cards for us too.

**This may sound like a dumb question: if rock and roll weren't about chicks and money but rather about a bunch of friends in a garage with guitars, would you still do it?**

Um, I think so. I started out playing not for chicks or money but because I liked it—I had a good time doing it. I fell in love with the music before all the bullshit. When you make it a job and a machine that's when it loses its fun. Its when the machine gets behind you is when it gets watered down. But when it comes down to it we love to play and we love to be on stage. And that's why we've been in this band for fifteen years as opposed to playing baseball or something. I think I'd be playing in a garage with my friends forever, just have fun and play and jam out on Maiden. There's lots of expectations and unfortunately it's a job. But when push comes to shove we do this because we love to play.

**Photo (sort of) by Ross**

# Kill Your Radio #1

Simon Brody of Drowningman  
discusses Ten records that influenced  
his musical career

## Clash "On Broadway" Boxed Set

I know it's a cheat to list a boxed set instead of an album but otherwise this whole list would be The Clash or at least me struggling to narrow it down to the 2 or 3 most important records. This set has it all. The blueprint of the for-real socially conscious punk band. The first band to push the level of musicianship within the genre. I've been finding myself over the last several years reading tons of books on them. Reading about their brushes with the law, sleeping in squats, the myth and legends of punk rock's most important band.

## U2 "Unforgettable Fire"

Already one of my favorite bands by my late teens as I struggled between punk, euro-pop, and new wave and even came to embrace a bit of metal here and there. Again another band with a message that I could respect and identify with. The production on this record between Brian Eno and U2 resulted in the bands most atmospheric, anthemic work. Having been a die-hard fan up till this point I see this as the last record of U2's that I actually loved since my dad ended up buying *Joshua Tree* before I had the chance, at which it became "music my dad likes" and lost some of it's cool. I have been coming around to them again since the last record, however.

## Misfits Boxed Set

This was the first punk band that used glamor, b-horror schtick, and injected their sloppy aggressive delivery with a melodic edge that appealed to my punk and new wave sides. Lyric wise they are one of the only bands (and this carried over into Samhain) that used romantic and sexual imagery in punk/hardcore. Something that I think rarely exists in what has classically been a pretty puritanical genre over-ruled by aggression or boo-hoo pop-punk. I had a devilllock all through high school and the skull painted on the wall of my bedroom that my dad now uses as his office and never painted over.

## Dismemberment Plan "Emergency and I"

My friend Scott Padden of Pilot to Gunner (who put out "Games at High Speeds," one of last year's best records) played this for me at a party. I loved it at first listen and ran out and grabbed a copy immediately. Since then it has become THE most played CD in the Drowningman van. Bittersweet, quirky, a bit funky but incrdeibly well written with a nod of the hat to The Talking Heads. Adventurous and amazing listening.

## Swing Kids Discography

I wrote this band off after hearing a taped copy of one of their 7's given to me by a friend. I just bought this last year and can't believe what I had been missing. This was the beginning of the

trend of punk kids playing metal but doing it in a punk way. The desperation and emotion bleeds out of the speakers. This does tons more to move me than what the hardcore/metal crossover has become and packs ten times the punch of the bands they'd influenced.

## At The Drive-In "Vaya"

I had liked the previous LP but this EP I think is the pinnacle of this band's career-mixing keyboards into the standard punk/hardcore set-up. Great song arrangements and incredible use of dynamics with stream of consciousness poetic lyrics. Again a very inspiring record by the best band of recent days.

## Unbroken "Fall on Proverb" 7" & Threadbare "Hoover" 7"

I hope it's okay to count two 7's, unrelated as they are. This was during my period of "being over hardcore" and settling into the emo/indie rock style. These two records woke me right up seeing what raw energy and clever arrangements could do for heavy music. I began to become a reborn believer.

## Deadguy "Fixation on a Coworker"

My love of hardcore was completely reborn after a weekend following this band around the Northeast getting pelted with flying spitballs and dodging headstocks to get my ears as close to the raw metal/hardcore hybrid pumping from the stage. Deadguy sold me lock, stock, and barrel. This was very insrumental in the early days of Drowningman. This record came out the week Drowningman started playing together and was carefully studied by all.

## Elvis Costello

Pretty much any of the early stuff: *This Years Model*, *My Aim is True*, etc. I just loved his voice. I spent years trying to perfect it and can still do a decent impersonation. This was my Dad's music before it was mine. I can also thank him for "The Harder They Come" soundtrack and my interest in reggae and dub in general as well as my hidden love of early Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan. Music with strong social commentary and amazing lyrics delivered with classic music.

## Bad Brains "I Against I"

This was the first hardcore record I heard where the musicianship truly blew me away. I spent months listening to it exclusively on my bus rides to and from school my senior year dissecting this record. One time listening just to the vocals, then the guitars, then the bass, and then the drums. This hasn't found its way into my CD player recently but was a very formative listening experince.

# Kill Your Radio #2

Fat Mike of NOFX and Me First & The Gimme Gimmes  
discusses Nine records that influenced the hell  
outta him

## Bad Religion "Suffer"

The record that changed punk rock. NOFX was on tour in Europe in '88 when I first heard this record. It blew me away, I listened to it about 5 times a day for 2 months. In the mid-to-late '80s everything was shitty hardcore, including my band. Bad Religion single-handedly brought melody back to the hardcore scene. Thanks guys.

## Operation Ivy "Hectic" 7"

I first heard this at a keg party in Ithaca, NY. Although their *Energy* record rules also, the first EP was the most original, coolest sound to come out in the late 80's. After I heard it, I wanted to quit NOFX and roadie for them.

## Descendents "Milo Goes to College"

This record stands the test of time better than any old school record. You know when you put on old records that you used to love and they just don't really cut it anymore? This one just keeps getting better every time you put it on.

## Minor Threat 7"

The best hardcore record ever made. Period.

## Fang "Landshark"

Yeah I know that the singer is a fucking murderer, but nothing gets me ready to get wasted and go out to the punk show like "Skinheads Smoke Dope."

## RKL "Rock and Roll Nightmare"

Whenever I totally run outta inspiration, I always go back to this record. It was the most insane record of its time and no one has touched that sound since. They were the punk rock Rush with a Darby Crash drug habit and they recorded and mixed the record in 4 days.

## Rudimentary Peni "Death Church"

Doesn't really stand the test of time, but I still listened to it about 200 times when I was seventeen years old.

## Lillingtons "Death by Television"

It may take a couple listens, but we all must concede that this is the greatest pop punk album of the 90's

## Propagandhi "How to Clean Everything"

When this came out, everyone said it sounded like NOFX. I wish we sounded this good. They made me want to be a better band both lyrically and musically.

## Randy "Human Atom Bombs"

Kids in Sweden all say that Randy stole the Hives' sound. Yeah they stole it and made it like 100 times better. The first garage-y band that has great melodies. I spent \$1,200 on a plane ticket to see em play and backed out at the last minute cuz I was sick. I still regret not going.

# Kill Your Radio #3

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Justin Brannan of Most Precious Blood  
discusses ten records he never fails  
to bring on tour

## Black Flag "Damaged"

I stole this tape from a Sam Goody in the Kings Plaza mall in Brooklyn. No record spoke to me like this one. I was in my early teens at the time, always in trouble at school and with my parents. It was a real uncomfortable time for me, I just couldn't stay out of trouble and I hated it. This record summed up every thought in my head. It was as if Black Flag was reading my mail. They were talking directly to me. This record (as well as *The First Four Years*) changed everything for me. Anything coming from PO BOX 1, Lawndale CA could do no wrong. It killed every rock star fantasy on television. I remember there was a time when I thought I would never be in a band because I didn't know how to read or write music, this shattered everything for me and ripped everything wide open. Greg Ginn became my Slash.

## Minutemen "Double Nickels On The Dime"

I think this is when I first fully understood that "punk" was truly an attitude and a way of life, undefined by a particular sound or style. At the time this guy Colin worked at The Wiz in my neighborhood and Colin was punk. He played in a band called Wax. They had songs about frozen bums on sticks. Colin stocked the store and bought all sorts of cool shit that had no business being in The Wiz. I didn't meet Colin until much later but indirectly he was responsible for getting me into punk even deeper. I bought this record, on cassette of course, because it had the SST logo on it. I remember bringing it home and expecting to hear another angry, loud record like Black Flag. Instead I heard funk, jazz and folk. I was confused. How could *this* be on SST? This band, and this particular album, remains one of my favorite records of all time. This record and this band stands alone in the fact that punk is not a sound or a look, but a lifestyle and a way of thinking. Absolutely incredible and unforgettable.

## Napalm Death "Scum"

I can't really remember the timeline for all these records and when they entered my life but it all sort of happened around the same time. I bought this cassette, as I did a lot of my tapes at the time on 86th street in Brooklyn at a store called The Record Factory (the store just recently closed). We used to hang out after school and just terrorize people up and down the street. We were immortal. This album is unbelievably important to me. The lyrics were insane, like nothing I had ever heard before. The cover was a throne of stone and zombie businessmen sitting on a pile of skulls with a Third-World family standing in front of them. The logos of corporations like Ford, Phillips, McDonalds, Union Carbide and Kraft were embedded in the throne of stones. This record destroyed me and opened my eyes like nothing before. This was probably one of the most influential albums in my life. It opened my eyes to the injustice and exploitation of the poor by the rich. There were no pictures of Black Flag in the *Damaged* cassette, so I didn't really know what they looked like and how old they were. Seeing the snapshot of Napalm Death on this record really inspired me. I could not believe that a bunch of guys who only looked a few years older than me had a record out and were creating such brutal and important music. I think that had an immeasurable subconscious effect on me. I'll always remember the first few lines of this album "multinational corporations, genocide of the starving nations!!!!" Absolutely crucial.

## Siouxsie And The Banshees "Juju"

Without a doubt, this is my favorite band of all time. I even have their name tattooed on me. Their history dates back to the Sex Pistols. Sid Vicious was their original drummer. They were one of the many bands inspired by the Sex Pistols' success despite lack of talent. They were audience members and roadies. They saw that anyone could do a band, so they did, and what they created was something totally unique. If you look up "gothic" music in the dictionary, it should say "see Juju". They defined the style. A record that was recorded over 20 years ago, to this day, remains unmatched, unrivaled and completely original. I should get the electric chair for the amount of ideas I've stolen from this record and this band. This record is haunting and beautiful. Its one of the only records that frustrates me because its so fucking good, it leaves me speechless. Thanks to my friend Rich Thomas for getting me into this band when I was still clay.

## Sick Of It All "Blood, Sweat and No Tears"

This was my first taste of hardcore. I remember being on vacation with my parents

in Binghamton, NY. We were in a mall and I grabbed this tape off the rack on a whim because of the angry, ripped, bloody logo. I saw the mean skinheads on the cover and I bought it because of how it looked. I had no idea who they were or what it was all about. This record changed my whole outlook on everything. I was hooked on the short, angry songs and the pictures of the crowd in a total frenzy, piling on top of each other and screaming. This record was tough as nails. On the drive up to Binghamton I listened to the Pixies, on the drive home I listened to Sick Of It All. To this day it's absolutely insane to me that I went from buying their tape in a mall because of their logo to becoming best friends with the members of the band. Pete even has "for those I love I will sacrifice" tattooed on his neck. I don't tell them this much because they'll think I'm a loser but I still pinch myself sometimes when I think about how I first got into Sick Of It All and how I am with them now. This record is timeless. When the nuclear war comes, there should be a copy of this saved to show the survivors what hardcore is all about.

## The Pixies "Trompe Le Monde"

Another amazing and essential record. Without The Pixies there is no Nirvana and no Weezer, and that's just two off the top of my head. So many bands cite The Pixies as one of their main influences. This band was doing their thing before anyone knew what it was exactly. I am a sucker for subtlety and tricks and the Pixies were one of the best. I hear something new with every record I listen to. They were also classic for poking fun at themselves. I don't think people fully grasp how important and unique this band was. The Pixies were *120 Minutes* before the show on MTV existed. The Pixies were "alternative" before they came up with the name for the genre. This was a real exciting time for me because I was getting into so much new music all at once. The Pixies, Teenage Fanclub, Sonic Youth, The Cure, Jesus & Mary Chain, Jane's Addiction....

## Sonic Youth "Goo"

Fuck, all these albums are so good. Sonic Youth was another band I followed from SST. This record has cover art by Raymond Pettibon. I can remember the day I bought this tape like it was yesterday. I learned so much from this band. I learned feedback and noise and distorted bass and just all this shit that was so new to me. I was in love with Kim Gordon. Sonic Youth was a wall of sound and noise, and the drums seemed to hold it all together. The drummer used maracas for drum sticks on a few of these songs. They got me into experimenting with different sounds and fucking with my guitars and my amps to get them to do weird shit. Punk as fuck. To this day if I write something with an octave chord I call it "the Sonic Youth chord." Another haunting and creepy record. I remember the first time I put it on, I felt like I was being let in on some big secret.

## The Doors "L.A. Woman"

The Doors were my first "favorite" band when I was a kid and I still listen to them now. This was their final record before Morrison died. He recorded his vocal tracks in a bathroom. This is a blues album and in my opinion, their best album. Just a classic. Their *Strange Days* record is a close second.

## The Kinks "Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround"

An amazing tongue-in-cheek album. My dad turned me onto a lot of great music, but I distinctly remember him sitting me down one day and playing this one for me. It left a lasting impression. The record deals with The Kinks' struggle with the music industry at the time. This is a forgotten classic, except for their hit single "Lola", which is probably my least favorite song on this gem. They were way, way before their time. The lyrics on here are amazing and hit home if you've ever gone against the grain in order to do what makes you happy. *Carpe Diem* before it was a buzz word.

## Bob Dylan "Highway 61 Revisited"

What can be said about Bob Dylan? Absolute genius. Every step he took, he broke ground. Can you believe in 1962 people called him a traitor because he went from playing solo acoustic to a full electric band? Do you know how many songs he wrote that other people covered and made their own? I really don't know what else to say about Dylan and this album. If this record isn't part of your collection, your collection is worthless. Listen to the lyrics on this album and wonder why you try at all. This record was Dylan's return from several years in hiding. Some speculated he was in a bad motorcycle accident and broke his neck. The accident supposedly happened on Route 61... if it happened at all. *Trompe Le Monde*. This was also one of the first records ever to list the members of the band and what they played on the recording.

# Kill Your Radio #4

Russ Rankin of Good Riddance  
discusses five of his top ten favorite records of all time  
(part II will be in Wonka Vision Magazine #20 out Sep. 15th:  
[www.wonkavisiononline.com](http://www.wonkavisiononline.com))

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## Adolescents self-titled

From one of the most fertile regions for punk rock music, Orange County, this band and album (along with bands like T.S.O.L., The Vandals, Social Distortion and D.I.) served as a blueprint for a sound and attitude which defined a generation of pissed-off suburban kids. This record is striking from the hot pink/aqua blue cover to the mug shots of the band on the back. The swastika partially visible on drummer Casey Royer's shirt is more indicative of the intended shock value of these punk pioneers than of any outwardly fascist leanings. The album is surprisingly polished on a production level given the year of its release. The tones are crisp and the album has a noticeable hi-fi sheen to it. There is depth and definition to the guitars that do not drown the vocals. Plus, this is one of the best examples of using the hi-hat and ride cymbal to create a driving, surf-inspired feel—a regional staple of this musical era. I've always felt that, if not for their age and the circumstances of alienation and disillusionment so prevalent in the early years of the Reagan administration, these guys may have just as easily conspired to make a jazz record or maybe a deeply contemplative blues piece. One gets the sense that this band at the moment this record was made were no less than teenaged savants. The fact that five kids from Orange County made a punk record in the early 1980's is hardly extraordinary. The record itself, however, is. This record is instantly recognizable after only a second's listen.

Although vocalist Tony Cadena will never be mistaken for Greg Graffin or John Bunch, his combination growl and spit delivery a la Darby Crash was not only a perfect fit over the deftly layered canvas of guitars and bass, but it also inspired countless vocalists since. Guitarist Rikk Agnew was a pioneer of the octave chord, which can be found all over hardcore these days. Agnew's use of the octave as a separate melodic instrument gives the songs, which are otherwise fairly basic in structure, an added dimension. Often these octave leads or solos serve as the song's hook where, traditionally the vocals would do so. Even the intro solo on "No Way" is unmistakably Agnew. Adding Steve Soto's precise bass work rounds out the full melodic punch delivered by this record. Soto's use of the oft-neglected D and G bass strings sets his playing apart from most of his peers at the time. Combined with Agnew's octave leads, Soto often creates an infectious counter melody to the vocals. This use of the guitar and bass as, for all intents and purposes, a separate vocal part is particularly evident on the haunting "Kids of the Black Hole" and the infectious "Amoeba."

Lyrical the record is very much a product of its time. Songs like "Self-Destruct" and "I Hate Children" are aptly shocking and remain true to the nihilistic theme of so many California bands of the time while "Democracy," "No Friends," "L.A. Girl" and "No Way" remain timeless epithets to alienation and chronically enlightened angst. This work remains one of my all time favorites more than twenty years after its release.

## Uniform Choice "Screaming for Change"

I've probably listened to this record more than any other in my collection. I'm amazed that it still plays; that the grooves aren't worn flat from the constant wear. Gavin Ogelsby did the cover art and its stark blacks and charcoal grays perfectly represent the snapshot-style action it depicts, looking at that cover made me want to be at that show, X's on my hands singing along and stage diving. The music, structurally, is quite similar to a lot of the hardcore emanating from the Washington DC area around the same time. Bands like Faith, Dag Nasty, and, a bit earlier, Minor Threat come to mind when listening. Vocalist Pat Dubar achieved a signature manner of screaming with just a hint of melody in his previous band, Unity, which the southern California scene hadn't really witnessed up to that point.

The production is sound but not faultless. The guitars are present with a distinct, gritty tone which cuts through really well and dominates the record's soundscape, often at the expense of the bass and the kick drum which are barely audible. The snare drum, when naked, is deep and rich but, during most of the album's frantic moments, is all but lost in the tinny maelstrom of drummer Pat Longrie's open hi-hat. This ends up being the most prominent piece of percussion on the record and, while it seriously detracts from the mix in my opinion it also serves to give the record a unique dimension; like a birthmark or an otherwise distinguishable feature. The songs are emotional bursts of hope, anger and dedication. Straight-edge as a movement had yet to see its halcyon days but the seeds planted in the early 1980's had definitely taken root in some extremely fertile soil by the time of this record's release in 1986. For a thumbnail sketch of the straight-edge "mission statement" one need look no further

than the aptly titled "No Thanks," which states, "if drinking's what it takes to be accepted then I'd rather stay aware and be rejected." Lines which serve to polarize and delineate the lifestyle we are led to believe the band subscribes to. The lyrical scope of the majority of the record established a formula for many of the bands who followed. Soon every band had the token song against racism, bullying ("Big Man, Small Mind"), abstinence from drugs and alcohol ("No Thanks," "Straight and Aler"), perseverance in the face of daunting obstacles ("Don't Quit," "Use Your Head," "A Choice"), and the requisite sensitive-male number ("Once I Cry").

History has shown a less than favorable light on the band's actual level of commitment to the ideals they so vigorously espouse on this album. Some would argue that this insight renders the work trite and obsolete. I disagree. Towards the end of my drinking "career" I would often gaze, blurry eyed, at the lyric sheet for this particular record and try to grasp the concepts it offered. "No thanks" made so much sense to me. I wanted to not drink. The fact that I believed the band didn't drink (ah, the innocence of youth!) showed me that an alternative to the way I was living did in fact exist. I'd mistakenly thought all along that, to be "punk" one had to consume ridiculous amounts of liquor and stagger around causing trouble. The message that I would absolutely discount when raised by my parents or friends (that my drinking would land me in jail or in the morgue) seemed attractive when set to the infectious musical tide created by this band. In my mind they made it OK to be sober. I often wonder if I would be sober today had it not been for this record. I know that it changed my perspective and altered my life. Many people pass the time discussing the origins of music. I happen to think that the song "Once I Cry" was a distant predecessor to the emo sound. Rock and roll with a decidedly sensitive lyrical edge and punk aesthetic. The off beat hallmark greeting card-esque "Silenced" which ends the album seems to be an even further attempt at promoting the band as sensitive. On first listen I wasn't sure whether to take it seriously or not. I wonder if it was an honest experiment in an otherwise restrictive genre or if it was done tongue firmly in cheek—the band rolling with laughter on the studio floor the moment it went to tape. I suppose the bottom line of why this album is so dear to me is not whether the band actually believed in the words they sang but that I believed in them and if Uniform Choice were, in fact, not as insincere as many have charged it just goes to show that one man's joke can serve as another's salvation.

## The Psychedelic Furs "World Outside"

While it's true that I once regarded my inescapable attraction to this band's music as a "guilty pleasure," I've come to be at peace with the fact that I am a fan and I don't care who knows it. The Furs are probably best remembered for such chart-topping hits of the 1980's as "Pretty in Pink" and "Love My Way." I have found something I like in all of their releases—the hits as well as the more obscure songs. I think the appeal, at least to me, lies in the stripped down musical nature of the songs and the haunted, rasping, cigarette whisper of vocalist Richard Butler. I can't recall another singer whose voice affects me the way his does. Strangely enough, my favorite Furs record comes from late in their career (released in 1991) and was not blessed by any radio support or cavalcade of press. It was no surprise that when I told people that the band I'm in was planning to cover "In my Head" most assumed I was referring to the Black Flag song of the same title. When I told them that it was in fact a Psychedelic Furs song they either said, "who?" or just responded with a blank stare. The overall sound of this record is, in my opinion, the most balanced and hard-hitting of the band's work. Slickly produced and richly textured it is an amazingly complex record. Many rock bands, especially those in the twilight of their careers, often release what I like to call "oh, by the way" albums which contain maybe two good songs—the "hits"—relegating the rest of the listening experience to a frustrating forest of filler. "World Outside" is not that type of record. Had the mainstream music industry not been so busy clamoring over itself to embrace what it called "grunge" at the time of its release I believe this album would have received its critical due as well as garnering the band a possible host of new fans. Alas, this was not to be. The state of the industry being what it was "World Outside" remained on the outside and was relegated to obscurity almost immediately upon its release. The songs themselves seem to reflect a band at odds with its place in the world and sticking to its musical guns in the face of a fickle public and an industry's changing mores. Butler's lyrics, always cleverly ambiguous, take on an especially cynical wit

and a hauntingly bitter depth; like one who has seen the thing we all fear and has returned to gravely recite his sobering discoveries. The band achieves it's staple of infectiously simple song structures sucking the listener into Butler's raspy, off-kilter melancholia. No other vocalist can make depression and separation sound so sweet. I've got several favorites on this one; the driving, relentless "Valentine," the bittersweet "In my Head" and "Until She Comes," as well as the soaring, anthemic "There's a World." "Get a Room" is an aching, emotional reverie laid over a sparse musical canvas of acoustic guitar and tamborine. As usual, Butler's words and delivery do most of the work and makes for a staggeringly powerful song. As a singer I am hugely influenced by this guy. His vocals always sound to me as though he recorded them immediately upon waking with a vicious hangover and smoking ten or twelve cigarettes. I picture him sprawled on a couch in the studio, signature sunglasses on, pitching his breathy rasps into the nearest microphone.

The Psychadelic Furs achieved musical notoriety their way—leaving a rich library of powerfully unique music. This record continues to inspire me no matter how many times I listen to it. I recently saw a live performance on HBO or some such thing filmed at Hollywood's House of Blues and, while I enjoyed the performance, I was a little disappointed that the band seemed reluctant to stray from the familiar material of their top 40 days, I hope they continue to play and I hope I get to see them live at least once play "Get a Room."

#### Flipper "Generic"

Like a lot of my earliest record purchases, this one was inspired by my involvement in skateboarding. I'm fairly sure I read about the band in Thrasher magazine and I know there was some Flipper graffiti at Derby Park too. *Generic* was a ballsy move from a marketing standpoint. Yellow album cover with only the words "Album" and "Generic Flipper" on both sides. I was curious so I picked it up. The subsequent lyrical genius and musical dissonance utterly changed my life.

Fair enough, Flipper will never be mistaken for the Boston Philharmonic or even a real band by today's standards. Whenever I expose a new person to Flipper's special brand of rock they invariably wrinkle their nose as if they've just caught a foul stench and then they'll say something like, "this is a joke, right?" I like to think of Flipper as a machine rather than a band. A hulking, rusted, malevolent apparatus whose sole purpose was to expose our shallow existence and wreck our sheltered lives. Their songs were the weapons with which I armed myself when I was forced to attend high school. I looked around me and I just couldn't relate to the hundreds of kids I was forced to co-exist with on a daily basis. They appeared to be blissfully lost in an embryonic state of societal micro-cliques and overwhelming self-importance. Status seemed to be achieved through a dizzying parade of surface deep relationships characterized by fake smiles and inane chatter or by an intrepid devotion to organized sports. I felt alienated and annoyed all the time. I became convinced that I was the only person on the planet who felt this way— that this condition was forever to be my solitary cross to bear then I heard this album and things changed. It was like an oasis of affirmation in a desert of separation. It begins with "Ever," droning drums anchoring a barely discernable bass line and a buzzing, chaotic wall of random guitar notes and feedback. This is the bleak, desperate tract with which the band backdrops its acerbic lyrical assault. "Ever do nothing and gain nothing from it? Ever feel stupid and then know you really are? Ever wish the human race didn't exist and then realize you're one too?" I was dumbstruck... I could relate. I'd felt misplaced inside the human condition, I saw us all as a cancer. Self-important wastes of space accomplishing nothing except the rapid decay and destruction of the planet. "Ever look at a flower and hate it? Ever see a couple kissing and get sickened by it?" The honesty and genuine disgust were things which struck an instant chord with me. I would listen repeatedly reading along with the lyric sheet just nodding my head, I'd thought those things and I'd felt that way. The song "Nothing" warned, "think too much and you'll go to jail and it's nothing, nothing, NOTHING,NOTHING!" Probably my favorite song is "Shed No Tears" I always thought that, if I ever killed myself, these lyrics would be a fitting epitaph. "Shed no tears for the suicide he has made his choice the pain of life is great and some will find it sweet to rot beneath the earth as we rot and live and breathe."

When I was a sophomore in high school, my 20<sup>th</sup> century literature teacher Mrs. Gill told me that I lacked the ability to appreciate the "classics." She

would frequently single me out in class as an example to my classmates of how not to be. She was constantly denigrating what she understood as my lifestyle and musical taste. She told me I would never amount to much due to my refusal to follow directions and my problems with authority. She gave us an assignment to attempt a journal and write some poetry and prose. Just to be a smart ass I began turning in Flipper lyrics and claiming it was my work. Surprisingly I began to get good marks on my journal as well as encouraging "comments" from Mrs. Gill. She had unwittingly succeeded in not only vindicating my lifestyle, but proving beyond a reasonable doubt what I had suspected along, that she was a fucking moron.

Anyway, back to the record. The eerie buzz of "Life is Cheap" is enhanced by a second vocal recorded at a higher speed giving the song a creepy, psychotic flavor. Both the normal vocal and the higher pitched double in perfect unison sing, "Life is pretty cheap it's sold a decade at a time. Life is pretty cheap it's so easy to find. Life is pretty cheap it's really nothing new. Life is pretty cheap except for the cold, delirious few." "I Saw You Shine" with the desperate "I've got to strip this flesh from my bones and I've got to hammer the walls with my hands." The great "Sex Bomb" is an endless stab at the cancerous heart of every shallowly simplistic love song ever written. Sadly, by the time I finally got to see them play live, Flipper were tragic grips of their various addictions and my long awaited Flipper experience was witnessing their death knell.

#### Lifetime "Jersey's Best Dancers"

Okay. Can I just say that this is one of the most brilliant album titles ever? It creates an expectant aura before one even listens to it and luckily this one delivers. Lifetime had evolved from a prototypically "emo" (I despise the term but it seems the only appropriate one here) sound in the early 1990's to a much more up tempo style by the release of *Hello Bastards*, the album prior to this one from 1995. By then the band had firmly established a compelling brand of frenetic punk rock with a decidedly artistic lyrical and textural flavor. They shared the fast beats and melodic hooks of many of the West Coast bands while retaining much of the stylistic milieu of their east coast contemporaries, this balance set lifetime apart from almost everyone else. "Hello Bastards" had featured a great tune called "Irony is for Suckers" and perhaps in a fitting piece of said irony, *Jersey's Best Dancers*, a landmark gem of a record, ended up being a posthumous release. It's almost as though the album left the band spent—having given all that was in them.

Lyrically this record sticks to the time tested subjects of love, loss, and introspection. Vocalist Ari Katz is able to amplify and deepen these convictions with his vibrantly emotional delivery. I'm reminded of Darby from The Germs as Katz growls, ad-libs, and generally slurs his way through these soaring odes to heartbreak and melancholy. Don't bother trying to figure out exactly what he is actually singing. Phrases often blur together in a mottled series of phonetic patches rather than words, so the lyric sheet won't be much help either. Katz seems to use his text as a guideline or jumping off point; like writing a story outline. One gets the sense these songs were never performed vocally the same way twice.

"Bringing it Backwards" seems to be an opinion piece on the state of the hardcore scene from the perspective of a band who's seen it's best and worst. The songs boasts an absolutely brutal breakdown which holds true to the formulaic east coast style the song critiques. "How we are" will strike a chord with anybody who's ever been anywhere in a band and dealt with the fickle, what-have-you done-for-me-lately nature of the industry at every level and the ultra-opinionated, cooler-than-you treatment by the scene's bourgeois. "We'll go our way we may have changed but we're still here and we came to play." The tune "Hey Catrine" is so heavy and slow that the ache it describes is almost palpable and the pounding refrain of "The Boy's No Good" possesses possibly the record's finest hook. My favorites are the opener "Turnpike Gates" and "Theme Song for a New Brunswick Basement Show," which paints such an accurate and attractive picture of the scenario that the listener can easily imagine walking into the show the song describes.

Great songs can put into words and music those innate and often intangible feelings we've all had but could never hold onto long enough to describe in any detail. Great albums boast songs like those in spades and *Jersey's Best Dancers* definitely qualifies. One of the best albums I've ever heard, and I was also lucky enough to get to meet these guys and see them perform these songs several times before they called it a day.

# Kill Your Radio #5

Jonah of One Line Drawing  
discusses Ten records he likes and then some

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## Miles Davis "Bitches Brew"

When people get all impressed with *Kid A* and *Kid B*-sides (*Amnesiac*), this is one of the albums I really wish more people knew about, and one of the albums that was a huge inspiration to Radiohead. Dense, patient, spooky, and as lyrical as any music with words. Maybe my favorite thing about this record is that it delivers on the promises of depth. So many records SOUND deep, and then when you dig in it's not there. Not so with this.

## Led Zeppelin "Physical Graffiti"

Yeah, I grew up with them and so many White Snakes have caricaturized them to awful effect and they were at least uncles to a lot of rock crap and they finally caved to commercials, and they're still the greatest rock band ever there was (Beatles = pop, Stones = rock-n-roll, Zeppelin = rock, just to get it out of the way). This is when rock was just teetering on its business ruin, but still filled with the idealism of counter-culture and messing with structure. I'm still a believer, but not naive to the fact that it's been lost. Anyway, they reached for things, they had great songs, and they all had that not-of-this-earth, born-to-rock quality that only seems to happen when archetypes are being carved. I picked this record out 'cause it's right in the middle of one of the more solid catalogs, and captures a lot of what they went for (which is a lot). *Kashmir 4:19*. Go there.

## Prince "Parade"

The main reason I pick this one is 'cause of the last song, "Sometimes It Snows In April." Whenever I'm in one of those tiresome arguments with someone that doesn't get that Prince is a bona fide genius, I finally give up, then casually throw it on. Inevitably, the dork in question says, "This is beautiful. Who is this?" And I get to be smug. The rest of the record rules too. Aside from the fact that it contains his second pop classic dance song made without a bass guitar part ("Kiss" -- the other is "When Doves Cry" from the ridiculous, irrefutable *Purple Rain*), it's chock full of too many moods to mention. People call this record and *Around The World In A Day* Prince's "white" records, which is ridiculous and moot and just sort of wrong. But there you go. I must give it up to Wendy and Lisa, who seem to have been a big part of Prince's creative zenith. They have a record called *Eroica* that's worth listening to. That said, this album, and 90% of Prince's catalog up til *Diamonds & Pearls*, are necessary.

## Public Enemy "It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back"

This record shares a lot with *Physical Graffiti*, and *Parade* too. It was the moment when things were perfectly perched; for a band, for a genre. Not too big and blown up, but full of the bravado that makes great things.

## U2 "The Joshua Tree"

Okay, my favorite is *Unforgettable Fire*, that's the difference between favorite and best (I'm attempting to be a bit academic here). There's no way to argue that *Unforgettable Fire* is a better record than this. Really, that battle is over in the first minute of "Where The Streets Have No Name," which is one of the most aching, triumphant album openings ever. Lyrics that sounds like they've always been, and absolutely defy

rock's typical decadence.

## The Clash "The Clash"

I'm sure there's an argument to be made for *London Calling*, but I'm just in love with this record lately. And there's something about a band's first record. The opening knives of "Clash City Rockers" is my favorite homage/fuckoff to what came before (The Who's "I Can't Explain"). "Complete Control" ("You're my deep dark hero!"), "White Man In Hammersmith Palais" ("If Adolf Hitler came today, we'd send a limousine anyway"), on and on. Some new DVD about them just came out, I heard a bit of it. Cool. Get this first.

## V/A "This Is Boston, Not LA"

I never ever pose as a punk-rock anything, but this was a little window for me that only in recent years has come back and reminded me. Gang Green, The Freeze, The Proletariat, and something like 30 other things that never fail, even 20 years later, to make me mad and happy and excited.

## Bob Dylan "Another Side Of Bob Dylan"

Speaking of punk, this is the guy that I'll call out as #1. The long bridge between Guthrie and Green Day. A bridge that's actually still standing and great. I picked this record (out of literally 42 or something) 'cause a) it's unadorned, and b) aside from the political ("Chimes Of Freedom") and personal serious stuff ("To Ramona") he's so known for, his amazing, weirdo wit ("Motorpsycho Nitemare," "All I Really Wanna Do") is right out there.

## The Beatles "Abbey Road"

The perfect blend of their psychedelia ("Sun King"), pop perfection ("Something"), and rockin-ness (the guitar breaks near the end of that long medley thing at the end of the record). Too many words already about this band, but never not worth mentioning.

## Owen (Polyvinyl) / Mirah (You Think It's Like This..., Advisory Committee: K Records) / Red Tape (High Voltage: New Age Records)

Yes, I'm just cheating now. I have to put in a few records/artists that I'm just in love with RIGHT NOW. Not that it's not all subjective, but these I'm not making a big argument for. Maybe in 20 years. But I doubt it. But they're still great pieces. Shout-outs to Sinead, Pearl Jam, Rickie Lee Jones, Nick Drake, The Cars, G-n-R, Cheap Trick, The Ramones, Radiohead, PJ Harvey, KRS-ONE, REM, Van Halen, Billie Holiday, P-Funk, Joni Mitchell, The Band, David Bowie, and who knows who else, for even being in my mind this time. On a different day any one of them might have snuck in there.

When I was in high school I had a horrifying/beautiful moment in which I realized I liked music better than people. Yep.

# Kill Your Radio #6

• • • • •

Chris of Death Cab for Cutie  
discusses ten records he simply flat  
out fucking loves

## Sloan "Between the Bridges" (1999)

*Between the Bridges* is an album in the way that most albums no longer are: A testament to the importance of running order, that the whole is potentially much greater than the sum of its parts. Some songs aren't nearly as good on their own as they are in the company of a sibling. Example: You're at the bowling alley and some moron decides it's a good idea to put a dollar in the jukebox to hear "Mean Mr. Mustard" and maybe something from *Dark Side of the Moon*. Similar is trying to split up any number of songs on *Between the Bridges*. "So Beyond Me" and "Don't You Believe A Word" are part of the album. They're not concept singles.

## REM "Green" (1988)

My friend Jerod devoted his life to the Church of Stipe in 1988. We were in the eighth grade, and I did not care. I thought about soda when I heard "Orange Crush." Why would anyone write a song about Orange Crush? Or sing a line about falling asleep with your teeth in your mouth? Of course your teeth are in your mouth. Jerod pummeled me with REM quotes for years, and would dissect them at length, miles from any sort of context. I didn't much care about the words. In 1991 I joined a record club and ordered *Green* as one of my twelve free albums because Jerod was still my friend and I respected him a great deal. It was obligation, really. But I knew all the songs inside and out, though I'd only heard the record a handful of times before. It was strange to me that they mostly made sense.

## XTC "Black Sea" (1980)

It's a modern tragedy that people keep missing XTC. The problem is that it's difficult to know where to start. I could easily have put any of five XTC records in this slot, but I settled on *Black Sea* because I think it's the roundest: it points equally to an angular, frenetic punk-rock past and to a strangely dark/bright pop-song future. I will also argue that it's one of the best-sounding rock records ever made. "I Was A Kaleidoscope" was very much modeled after "Respectable Street," the first song on *Black Sea*. Every self-respecting fan of the latter-day DC modernists (especially Burning Airlines) should own this record. They're paying homage in the good way. And the bad way, you ask? It should also be noted that Les Claypool absolutely fucking stole the South Park theme from XTC ("Crossed Wires," *White Music*, 1977). May justice have its way with your stony soul, Les.

## Talking Heads "Remain in Light" (1980)

If anyone knows what series of items and/or players built the solo in "Born Under Punches," please let me know. Sometimes it feels like "creative" no longer contains the word "create."

## Talk Talk "Laughing Stock" (1991)

*Laughing Stock* came ten years too early. It's the defining moment in a genre that didn't really exist until Tortoise came along, and didn't mature until Radiohead got all nebulous and spacey. And even that's not quite accurate: Both those bands are pretty well original when you consider how full of imitation (plagiarism, Mr. Claypool) our world is. *Laughing Stock* is still totally revolutionary, and will be referenced by new revolutionaries everywhere for years to come (umm, myself excluded).

## Red House Painters S/T (1993)

This record is the prettiest mess I ever did hear. Either one of the self-titled Red House Painters records from 1993, actually. Buy them both. They

are truly scary documents of confusion and emotional severity, instruction manual negatives filled with accounts of what not to do. There are several, if not seven or eight, perfect songs between the two records, but the high point is "Strawberry Hill," in which a delinquent child is carted from somewhere in Ohio to somewhere in California to spend a summer with upstanding and morally fibrous relatives: "we know who you are / we read through your diary / we read your poems while you were sleeping." High fiber indeed.

## Kraftwerk "The Man Machine" (1978)

*The Man Machine* is a masterpiece of modern funk, basking in the same divine glow as James Brown's "Sex Machine" years. I feel it's important to point out that Kraftwerk built their instruments out of stuff you can get at Radio Shack, but not out of stuff better than what you can get at Radio Shack. Their brains work like old computers, tangled messes of log functions and soldered wires. They are German, and their unique Deutsch primness is evident in their recordings. They invented the drum machine. But bearing all that in mind, it's mathematically impossible for *The Man Machine* to be funky. At all. So why is it? There's no Marvin Gaye soul here: These robots are totally sexless. There's not even really a Parliament stomp; it's more like listening to a ticker-tape parade. And *The Man Machine* only knows how to count to four... but then again, maybe that's it.

## Brainiac "Hissing Pigs In Static Couture" (1996)

Brainiac was the sort of band that you had a physical reaction to, and you either loved them or hated them as a result. Those familiar with the band's work understand my position. The unfamiliar should play this little game of make believe (come on, it'll be fun): You're the elementary school secretary, and the principal decides that, after a routine fire drill, the kids are a little too drag-ass getting out of the building. "Genuine lack of hustle," he says, "not enough fear." You are charged with the task of finding a more dramatic sound for future fire drills, something a wee bit terrifying. There is but one right answer, and it's the first twenty seconds of "I Am A Cracked Machine." Turn it up sometime. It's enough to make anybody duck and cover, or run, or something. Totally brilliant.

## PJ Harvey "Rid of Me" (1993)

*Rid of Me* is easily the weirdest record of PJ Harvey's career but possibly the best. The whole thing sounds like a stab wound: Sticky and desperate, hot and hateful, all at the same time. It's another case for the well-tempered running order, smoldering through seven challenging and sometimes unforgiving songs before really catching fire. *Stories From the City, Stories From the Sea* was a limp handshake of a record by comparison. I hope she can figure it out again someday.

## Genesis "Duke" (1980)

It's hard to be taken seriously as a fan of anything that bears Phil Collins' name. Nobody understands. Understandably, I suppose, but *Duke* is an exception. *Duke* sits in a lovely and small place in the career of Phil Collins: It's the only record of the post-Gabriel Genesis years where Phil is neither afraid nor cocky. None of the self-important bullshit that typifies his solo albums can be found here. And oddly enough, the best track on the record ("Man of Our Times," one of my favorite songs ever, honestly, really) was written by Mike Rutherford. I bet your library has a copy. No risk of being ashamed there.

# Kill Your Radio #7

The boys in Engine Down  
review their top ten favorite records of all time  
and want you to know that these aren't necessarily the best  
records of all time-- just their favorites

• • •

## Built to Spill "Perfect From Now On"

It's impossible to distinguish whether the feeling of nostalgia that you get from a certain record is actually due to the music itself, the time of your life that surrounds your infatuation with the music, or some combination of the two. I'd like to think that the two are inexorably linked and that one's perception of art/music will always hinge upon personal and emotional location. It seems pointless to even ponder, as you would just end up talking yourself in circles (like me, right now). I'm rambling about the subjective nature of art appreciation because this record is highly linked to a life experience for me. Doug Martsch wrote this record as the soundtrack to a failing/failed relationship. I immersed myself in this record as the perfect soundtrack to my own failing/failed relationship. This record is ideal, both sonically and lyrically, for wallowing in self-pity, contemplating just how bad things can get. All of the signature elements of an indie record from the Pacific Northwest are here: smart compositions, witty yet poignant lyrics, stiff, funky-white-boy drumming, jangly guitar, wizardry, etc. The stripped-down, simple and poppy songs of the first couple of Built to Spill records are replaced on this one by lush, layered, well-developed dirges. This is not to say that Doug lost his pop sensibility to a fog of melancholy. The pop backbone is still there, it's just been fleshed out with a host of warm, organic overdubs, and bitingly bitter sentiment. I'm a sucker for strings, especially cello, and this record tastefully employs them on most of the songs. I'm a pretty patient fellow, and I tend to listen to records in their entirety, but this is a record that I have an especially hard time picking favorites from because it is so strong throughout. Perhaps the second track, "I Would Hurt a Fly," is representative of the overall feeling of the record. (reviewed by Jonathan)

## Prince "Purple Rain"

This album is a real work of self-promotional genius: an album that serves as the soundtrack to a movie starring the musician, in a fictionalized but glamorous role as a struggling artist. (Vincent Gallo is making a valiant effort to be considered the Prince for the new millennium). Seriously, all marketing prowess aside, this record is really good. These are strong '80s pop songs with a heavy dose of sexuality, and while they may sound dated, they are still totally inspiring. I can still listen to, and get into, all of the songs on this album (which is a real accomplishment in longevity for an '80s pop record). This album is also really impressive. Aside from the fact that Prince produced, arranged, composed, and performed most of everything on the record, the title track was recorded *live* at 1st Avenue in Minneapolis. The performance is magical, and I only wish that I could have been a part of the music scene in Minneapolis when it was possible to have experienced that kind of spectacle in person. Instead, I was in Virginia, in the 3rd grade with parachute pants and a starter mullet, trying to talk all the kids at Keeley's birthday party into making a *Purple Rain*-style movie with the video camera that his parents had just gotten. Excited by the idea at first, eventually all the other kids flaked, and opted to jump on the trampoline instead. My director's vision of a rock and roll film including babes, motorcycles, and a smoke machine went unfulfilled that year, but maybe it's not too late to live that dream. (reviewed by Jonathan)

## Jeff Buckley "Grace"

This album is my favorite of all time and features one of the greatest vocalists of the twentieth century. Is that a bit much? Greatest? Right as the first notes of the album are played you hear the smooth timbre of Jeff's voice, which pulls you into the album. He was a songwriter with a classic style, a rock background, and comprised of heavy jazz influences. The first track, "Mojo Pin," shows off his incredible vocal range and ability to create deep contrasts in dynamics. At first listen I was a little uneasy about how balls-out he was vocally, but then was forced to embrace it. The first week I got the album, it was the only thing I listened to. I had one copy in my headphones so I could walk to class and the CD in my stereo for when I got home. I must point out that this is a common trait with lots of music that I have recently purchased. It usually lasts for a week and then I return to the rest of my CD collection. But I swear to you, this lasted for FOUR months. It was THE ONLY CD I listened to. I even had three tapes at one point with the songs in a different order because it was all I wanted to listen to. Above all I am amazed of how popular this album still is in pop culture. The album was made in 1995-96 when grunge and punk ruled, but was slowly fading out. What he was doing was way before his time and it's a shame we will not see him progress. But like all other rockers that die tragically (including Ozzy, who I believe actually is dead), we are left with an amazing album. (reviewed by Cornbread)

## Nirvana "Nevermind"

O.K., all right, all right. I am not sure if this album is a given favorite among all indie rockers or just me, but I feel a strong need to include it. Let me just tell you that when you first are learning to play the drums and you have no style and can only play the "funk" beat, hearing this album is a breath of fresh air. The drums are so solid and full on this album, which is due to an amazing production job and Señor Grohl. It totally changed the way I thought rock was supposed to rock. This is what got me wanting to beat the ever-living-shit out of my drum set and pay lots of money replacing cymbals. Above all it was the first tape that my parents didn't hate when playing it the car on the way to Myrtle Beach for summer vacation. (reviewed by Cornbread)

## Fiona Apple "When the Pawn..."

When Engine Down was living in three separate towns and I had to drive an hour to and from practice at night, this is what I loved listening to. I used to make so much fun of my cousin's 10 year old daughter because she loved Fiona Apple. I had never heard her but just thought she was some crappy pop star like Mandy Moore (even though this was pre-Mandy). So I went home and heard the CD at a friend's house where I was like, "What the hell is this?" He told me to take it home and listen to it, and I was blown away. I then became a huge fan of her music, even though she can cause quite the scene, and could not wait till her next release. Not only did, *When the Pawn...* have an amazing collection of songs, but it involved Jon Brion who is the most amazing producer of all time (Rufus Wainwright, Aimee Mann). The sounds on this album are so diverse and range from a variety of natural and electronic tones. It is so refreshing to know that talented female songwriters still exist in a world of Britney. (reviewed by Cornbread)

### **Motley Crue "Shout at the Devil"**

This was a vast turning point in my life, when I discovered Motley Crue. I was around the age of 10 and Prince was the fuel that got my juices flowing. After having found one of my Prince pictures, ripped out of a magazine and on the floor, I noticed that on the other side was quite a crude looking bunch of guys. This was Motley Crue and just their image made me feel like rock had a whole new meaning that I didn't yet know about. After running to the Mall with my mother I got into a record store and found the record *Shout at the Devil* by Motley Crue. The cover looked like a scene from *Mad Max* with more leather and spikes. I was taken, and I bought the album based on pure image. After listening to the record it threw me for a loop as I was not sure how to digest the music. It was not as slick as records I had listened to before, being a part of the top-twenty countdown culture of the 80's. The total edge and attitude that it was saturated with gave me chills and was more personal to me. They sounded as if they were "jamming" in my parents' band room and telling everyone to let loose. This record influenced me as a musician from the beginning. Motley Crue inspired me to learn the guitar and showed me that you don't have to have twelve studio musicians and a huge budget to make music. It could be all from within a style without rules of musical theory or integrity. It was raw, and the first example of music not accepted by the mainstream that I had loved. When they started to follow the glam rock image I was not as devoted because fellow classmates now knew "Smoking in the Boys Room" and Motley Crue was no longer my hidden gem. (reviewed by Keeley)

### **Radiohead "KID A"**

This is a groundbreaking record for me mainly because I have been following Radiohead's progress since day one. *Ok Computer* was such a mind blowing record first off as it merged rock, mood, technology, and soul with such perfection for me. During the long wait between the albums I lost grasp of what they might try next. When *KID A* was finally released I could not believe their guts. They obviously had a winning formula with the *OK Computer* album as they won numerous awards for it. To release an album like *KID A*, with such an experimental approach to rhythm and melody, really was a gamble for such successful mainstream artists to take. It was more ingenious composition, song construction, mood, words, packaging, and theory than I had heard in a long time. The fact that a band with three guitarists can write an album mainly using beats, unstructured melodies and grooves all with minimal guitar is refreshing. It just shows that one-trick-ponies can be an easy comfort zone to stay in, but to thrive and continue to write amazing music while experimenting is quite an accomplishment. (reviewed by Keeley)

### **LL Cool J "Bad"**

This is how it all started. When I was in 5th grade my mother and I were shopping in K-Mart and having a discussion. I was trying to explain to her that I wanted to get a walkman and some tapes and that to do this I needed to borrow some cash 'til my allowance came. My mother responded with: "Jason, you don't like music." Go figure. At age 25 I have worked in a record store for 5 years now and been in bands

since I was 16. Anyway, I explained that all the kids had them and that I wanted a walkman so that they would never have to hear my music. I could use it to mow the lawn, chores around the house... come on. School dances were coming up... I needed to practice. "No".

A week later in the same K-Mart, I presented the argument again. This time with the right answer, "it's your money, whatever". So that is how I got my first tape by LL. I can't really say that I am a fan now, but when the police noises began on the first track, oh man. (reviewed by Jason)

### **Dinosaur Jr. "Green Mind" / Bad Religion "No Control"**

These were the only two cassettes that I listened to on the way to middle school. Middle school was when I started skateboarding, which is how I learned about most music. I picked up *Thrasher* for music reviews as it came out. I would read reviews and then head to the mall to get the tapes that seemed interesting. Sad to say, the Roanoke Mall did not have 90% of what I went to look for. These two were the gems that I found. I never got tired of them, they stayed in my walkman to and from school and then when I went out to skate. I remember my friend Justin was getting out of skateboarding and into church because of his parent's wishes. Since he had gotten me into skating, he of course wanted me to also go to his church outings. Needless to say, he was not into Bad Religion and it was where our friendship started to fade. Weird how those things work. He had so much to do with the shaping of who I am as a person and I have not talked to him in years. (reviewed by Jason)

### **The Dirty Three "Ocean Songs"**

This was the record that started my obsession with instrumental music. Also, this is the record I push all the time at the record store where I work. I actually gave it a listen because of the Touch and Go label on the back, being such a fan of Jesus Lizard and so on. At that time, I probably wouldn't have even tried if I had known it was instrumental, but from the opening notes I was hooked. It came at a perfect time for me. It is the only record that I can say I want played at both my wedding and my funeral. I can argue 'till the cows come home that this is one of the most beautiful pieces of work ever. Another love of this record comes with its theme, every song to me reminds of actually being surrounded by water, afloat or drowning. People have always been able to get moods across on record, but not like this. Something as unique and ever changing as a body of water, caught and described by a guitar, violin, and a drum set. With its mood, I can listen to it at anytime, happy or sad, or in between. In a way it makes me feel all right with being alone, like being out to sea. It is just you and the ocean (or this record). This record also started my obsession for vinyl. I really wish I used words better to describe how much this record means to me. I had to stop listening to it with people around because I hate when it is interrupted. (reviewed by Jason)



**Alkaline Trio**

by Kevin Scanlon



**Hey  
Mercedes**

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**Drowningman**

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## Recover



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*Out in October!*
- 2) **Greg Macpherson Band**: "Numbers" from *Good Times Coming Back Again* CD (G7: [www.g7welcomingcommittee](http://www.g7welcomingcommittee))
- 3) **Bad Astronaut**: "Katherine Morgan" from *Houston we have a Drinking Problem* CD (My Records: [www.myrecords.com](http://www.myrecords.com))
- 4) **Dag Nasty**: "Ghost" from *Minority of One* CD (Revelation: [www.revelationrecords.com](http://www.revelationrecords.com))
- 5) **The Gamits**: "Like White Noise" (Suburban Home: [www.suburbanhomerecords.com](http://www.suburbanhomerecords.com))
- 6) **Billy Music**: "Tour Song" from *Midwest Index* CD (Law of Inertia: [www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com))
- 7) **Eighteen Visions**: "You Broke Like Glass" from *Vanity* CD (Trustkill: [www.trustkill.com](http://www.trustkill.com))
- 8) **The Nationale Blue**: "Hope Without Saying" from *A Different Kind of Listening* CD (Iodine: [www.iodinerecords.com](http://www.iodinerecords.com))
- 9) **Angels in the Architecture**: "A Few Things for You" from *The Distance in Writing* CD (Law of Inertia: [www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com))
- 10) **Miracle of 86**: "Untitled" from *Kevin Kolankowski* CD (Immigrant Sun: [www.immigrantsun.com](http://www.immigrantsun.com))
- 11) **Home Grown**: "Give it Up" from *Kings of Pop* CD (Drive Thru: [www.drivethrurecords.com](http://www.drivethrurecords.com))
- 12) **Glasseater**: "You've Come Along" from self-titled CD (Fearless: [www.fearlessrecords.com](http://www.fearlessrecords.com))
- 13) **The Reunion Show**: "The Art of Nothing" from *The Motion* EP (Law of Inertia: [www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com))
- 14) **Zombie Apocalypse**: "Bastard Shit Bastard" from "This is a Spark of Life" CD (Ides of March: [www.atdawnnewagewar.com](http://www.atdawnnewagewar.com))
- 15) **Orange Island**: "Drinking to Bend" from *Everything you Thought you Knew* CD (Iodine: [www.iodinerecords.com](http://www.iodinerecords.com))
- 16) **As hope Dies**: "Birthplace and Burial Site" from *Birthplace and Burial Site* CD (Undecided: [www.undecidedrecords.com](http://www.undecidedrecords.com))
- 17) **Gatsbys American Dream**: "Where Shadows Lie" from *Why We Fight* CD (Rocketstar: [www.rocketstar.com](http://www.rocketstar.com))
- 18) **Black Widows**: "It Gets Dark so Early" from *Stops a Beating Heart* CD (Initial Records: [www.initialrecords.com](http://www.initialrecords.com))
- 19) **Someday I**: "I Already Quit" from *ref 4* CD (Owned and Operated: [www.oandorecords.com](http://www.oandorecords.com))
- 20) **This Year's Model**: "Leopard Prints and Studded Belts" (featuring Darryl of the Glassjaw) from Wanted: New Best Friends MCD (Law of Inertia: [www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com))
- 21) **Zolof & The Rock and Roll Destroyer**: "I Owe You" —previously unreleased (Wonka Vision: [www.wonkavisiononline.com](http://www.wonkavisiononline.com))
- 22) **Stereotyperider**: "I Never Want to Rest" from *Same Chords, Same Songs, Same Six Strings* CD (Suburban Home: [www.suburbanhomerecords.com](http://www.suburbanhomerecords.com))

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# Book Reviews

## Dance of Days



by Mark Andersen and Mark Jenkins (Soft Skull Press):

If you're like me, then you eagerly devour any and all literature with some sort of authoritarian credibility on the history of punk rock and the people and places that make it our favorite form of culture. However, much of the literature we read on punk is poorly researched and poorly written. Fortunately, *Dance of Days: Two Decades of Punk in our Nation's Capitol*, a 200 page account of the conception and maturation of punk in Washington DC-- arguably the nation's best punk scene over the last 20-something years-- is well written and very very informative which provides a refreshing break from the norm. To be sure, *Dance of Days* should be nick-named the Ian Mackaye story as a good majority of the book chronicles his role as the touchstone of the DC scene. Ultimately this decision is a fair one since Ian had direct involvement in so much of the best DC punk and is arguably the most visible symbol of punk rock's national evolution as well. Nonetheless, if you're looking to find out about hardcore during the time of riot grrl (e.g. Battery, Worlds Collide), for instance, or pretty much anything that has absolutely nothing to do with Dischord then you may be looking in the wrong place as almost every band and person in this book has some direct involvement with Ian and Dischord. The end result is not only fascinating but an enjoyable read that will have you interested from start to finish. It is simply astounding how grass-roots the DC scene has been from the beginning. This book does a

very good job of detailing how DC went from an unlikely musical epicenter to ground zero for the punk world in the '80s and early '90s. The origins of Bad Brains, Minor Threat, Scream, Government Issue, Henry Rollins, Bikini Kill, Beefeater, Nation of Ulysses, and Fugazi are very interesting-- the chapter on the explosion of Minor Threat and Bad Brains into the national scene is phenomenally described-- although in my opinion bands like Scream, Ignition, Faith, Marginal Man, Half Japanese, Jawbox, Grey Matter, and others get shafted here (plus, labels like Lovitt, Desoto, Simple Machines, Teen Beat, and others are virtually non-existent in the narrative). Similarly, the book often hints at a great female role within the DC scene but never quite delivers on its promise to account for Chalk Circle, Autoclave, Slant 6, etc. Overall, I would say this is a must-have for anyone interested in the better known DC bands. And, I will guarantee you that after you finish the book you will run out and buy half of the Dischord catalog. But, you'll be too late as I was just informed that I bought the very last Ignition and Scream CDs available. Too bad for you. By Ross Siegel

## Da Capo Best Music Writing 2001



Guest Editor, Nick Hornby; Series Editor, Ben Schaefer (Da Capo Press):

This year's edition of *Da Capo Best Music Writing* keeps the blurb "The year's finest writing on rock, pop, jazz, country & more" on its cover and continues to live up to that claim, covering artists as disparate as Billie Holiday, Sleater-Kinney, and Johnny Cash. And even though most of the publications these stories are gathered from are domestic, good music writing is universal -- one of the most interesting pieces is on the rave scene in Israel's West Bank.

But it isn't all quite so heady. In fact, the book begins with a piece that could have only been written by aficionados rivaling the record store employees in the film version of their novel *High Fidelity*, "The Rock Snob's Dictionary," by Steven Daly, David Kamp, and Bob Mack. Originally published in *Vanity Fair*, it defines artists and terms which appear in ninety percent of all music writing that most people are largely unfamiliar with -- whether they'll admit it or not. The piece is tongue-in-cheek and dead-on at the same time, sometimes even in the same passage. For example, take the definition for 'lo-fi': "Luddite recording aesthetic championed by contemporary artists who tend toward sparse, raw production and believe that older, analog equipment produces a more 'honest' or 'organic' sound; or, more realistically, by artists too musically incompetent and undisciplined to record crafted, finished music."

Other highlights include Jim DeRogatis' confrontational phone interview with Third Eye Blind's Stephan Jenkins, where the frontman for the most corporate rock group since Journey spits out nuggets like, "our band has been, if not the most D.I.Y. next to Fugazi, then number two or three." Throughout the interview, DeRogatis keeps his composure and is always ready with a biting response or witty reply, proving that music journalists don't always have to pander to musicians and portray them as flawless human beings. There are too many sparkling pieces here to single out each one, and even though ex-*Rolling Stone* contributor Richard Meltzer lambastes Cameron Crowe (going so far as to call Almost Famous "insufferable dogmeat") in his story, "Third Spud from the Sun: Cameron Crowe Then and Now," I got the same fuzzy feeling reading some of these essays as I did from watching that film. That we writers, in our own way, can actually be sort of, well...cool. By Jonah Bayer

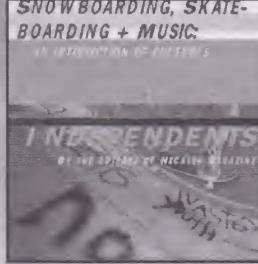
## American Hardcore: A Tribal History



by Steven Blush (Feral House)

I'm a sucker for punk rock history books. I usually don't care how terribly accurate they are, 'cause sometimes myth is far more telling than fact; poor writing is often times negligible and forgivable, as is bad organization; and sexism and innuendo are often overlooked (or ignored) if the stories are captivating. This is why I found *American Hardcore* thoroughly enjoyable. Steven Blush is a terrible writer (and this is coming from someone who isn't a very good writer either), and he makes generalizations about gender and race a bit too often for comfort, but his book tells some of the most interesting punk rock history I've read in while. I don't think I've ever seen as complete an account of the roots of Black Flag or SST, the turmoil that was the Misfits in their heyday, the vitality of the Austin, TX hardcore scene, or the danger and urgency (not to mention the amazing amounts of homophobia) in the New York scene from bands like Agnostic Front and the Cro-Mags. But, Blush's theory that the focal points of American hardcore were location-based rather than ideology based is very compelling, and he backs up his claim rather well. Like any good book on punk rock there are lots of good visuals here. However, I found Blush's style of telling stories through small snippets of interviews with band members interwoven with his own commentary to be disjointed, confusing, and somewhat banal, but then again, we can't expect a guy that writes for *High Times* to be Shakespeare now can we. These legit punks of the early '80s weren't rock scientists, and that was kind of the point. By Ross Siegel

## Declaration of Independents



by the editors of Heckler Magazine

I'll be honest: I prefer skiing to snowboarding and the closest I come to ollieing with any grace or skill is playing Tony Hawk on PS2 at my friend Tim's house. Nonetheless, I have always been fascinated by both sports and the culture that surrounds them. While most boardsports magazines seem to me to be more obsessed with garnering lots of advertising dollars than a love of the sport, in my admittedly limited experience, *Heckler Magazine* seems to be different. Firstly, they're located in Sacramento-- a short ride to the snowboard hotspot of Lake Tahoe-- so it's unlikely this magazine is in the business for anything less than a love of the topics they cover. Plus, Heckler has always been just as concerned with the soundtracks to boardsports as they have to the riders themselves, which has always been appealing to me. In short, this book is really cool. Tons of informative and interesting interviews with everyone from Steve Alba, Lance Mountain, and Shaun Palmer, to Ian Mackaye and Steve Albini.

The interviews assume a basic knowledge of their respective cultures. In words, this book isn't pandering to your mother or anyone who is into board sports as a trend. Instead, the book hopes that its readers will have some vague sense of what a kick-flip is or how Metallica was influenced by early '80s punk. This is very cool. I would go as far to say that this is the most interesting book I received (for free) all issue. Not bad. By Ross Siegel

# VIDEOS

**Automatic Magnetic (Bifocal Media) VHS**—The jacket for this video describes it as "underground/diy/music/film/politics/business/culture," which sounds like a great idea for a documentary, don't it? Unfortunately, this video doesn't really represent the overwhelming potential of DIY culture and ultimately even takes away from it. Admittedly, most of the live footage looks pretty slick; Milemarker's segment confirms that—although I prefer Al Burian's writing to his music—the band's live shows are an explosion of energy and brazen emotion. However, the interview following their cancels out the visceral onslaught, what with the interviewer asking common sense questions like "Why did you sign to a record label?" and initiating a ten-minute explanation of everyone who has ever been in the band. This was about as exciting as learning about a stranger's family tree. Sets by The Faint, Party of Helicopters and, Superchunk suffered from the same exciting-live-footage-boring-interview syndrome while Kerbloki, a shameless Beastie Boys rip-off, seemed strangely out of place in the roster. There are interviews with two indie film-makers one of whom's film is actually really well done and another whose film, starring Mr. Burian himself, looks worse than the sophomore film screenings at my school. Maybe I blinked or went to the bathroom, but the business and politics aspects seemed largely non-existent unless asking the dude from Superchunk a few questions about his record label is significant enough to warrant the jacket claim. But by far the coolest part of this video doesn't really have anything to do with DIY. It's some dude showing off his Iron Maiden collection: rare seven-inches, Eddie cardboard cutouts, picture discs—it was truly amazing, although I'm guessing they included it for irony's sake. This is an interesting concept and this is definitely passable, I just think that the DIY ethic is so vital that especially after seeing their *Braid* documentary, the kids at Bifocal can do better. JB

**Blank Generation / Dancing Barefoot (MVD Video) DVD**—This DVD double feature contains two separate yet related films involving New York City's nascent punk movement in the mid 1970's. All the key players are present: The Patti Smith Group, Television, The Ramones, The Talking Heads, Blondie, and The Heartbreakers, as well as less known luminaries. The live footage is really captivating to watch, and this film is a rare glimpse into what things were like when everything was new, before mainstream media had appropriated punk. The fact that footage of the bands in unsynced is a major strike against this video, and though sometimes the music in the background fits, for the most part it makes you wonder why the filmmaker didn't record audio tracks along with the film. Regardless, this video shows the incredible diversity of this scene (seeing Blondie circa 1977 is reason enough to buy this), and is also a good introduction to lesser-known acts like The Marbles and Harry Toledo. The other half of this video, *Dancing Barefoot*, is a documentary on Ivan Kral, a Czech refugee who did time playing guitar with just about every punk act in the late seventies from Patti Smith to Iggy Pop to The John Waite Band. Everyone from Iggy to David Byrne is present to give their own Kral anecdote, but after a while the stories get a bit redundant; and while his life was very interesting, there's only so much of it you can take in one sitting. However, this video also documents the early days of CBGB when it was the "only rock club in New York City" and features live performances from The Patti Smith group as well as her passionate poetry readings. While overall, this footage doesn't have the aesthetics today's super-slick concert footage, both of these (especially *Blank Generation*) are vital as a historical document of where punk has come from. Even if you weren't there (and most of us weren't) the personalities and performances live on today in every punk kid who is sitting in his room right now, figuring out the chord progression to "Blitzkrieg Bop." JB

**Dead Kennedy's "The Early Years Live" (Target) DVD**—I think the first real punk rock CD I ever bought was the Dead Kennedy's seminal album, *Holiday in Cambodia*. Later, I had the patches, T-shirts, and even wore the "Nazi Punks Fuck off" armband on my camouflage jacket. However, I hadn't dragged out my DK CD's in quite while, that is until this nifty DVD ended up in my mailbox. As the title implies, this live document (originally released on VHS format in 1987) chronicles the Dead Kennedys' career from their inception in 1978 until 1981 via live performances of classic tracks like "California Uber Alles," "Kill The Poor," and, of course, a blazing version of "Holiday in Cambodia," spliced with actual war footage. This is Jello Biafra in his prime, and he flails around the stage and convulses on the floor like an epileptic as he screams his anti-conservative manifestos to captive (and often violent) audiences. Although the DK's often get lumped into the same category as bands like the Circle Jerks and Fear, they were much more innovative musicians and their ability to meld punk aggression with surf-style staccato guitar picking and ultra-political tongue-in-cheek lyrics is a perfect model for how a punk band can be successful without catering to the masses. Aside from nine songs this video has contains a hilarious news segment about Jello Biafra's unsuccessful bid for mayor as well as individual biographies and a band history. (Who knew that "Too Drunk to Fuck" was a top 40 single in Britain in 1981?) At only 30 minutes, this is all too brief, but it does provide a glimpse into the workings of one of punk's most influential bands at their youthful apex and I'm guessing it's a helluva lot more entertaining than catching one of the Dead Kennedy's reunion shows this summer. JB

**Earth Crisis (Victory) DVD**—All the promotional materials and title screens indicate that this is the Earth Crisis history video, but in there is very little history here. Rather there are a lot of monotonous interviews with the members of EC, and some of the most boring live footage any hardcore band has ever produced. This should be renamed "What the lead guitarist of Earth Crisis thinks of his now defunct band" since he is by far the most interviewed person in the DVD. This video is mostly comprised of the guitarist sitting in a room talking about the history of his band (they're not the Rolling Stones, but don't let him know that). Among others, such exciting topics as the band's last show ever, their van accident of yore, their trip to Japan, and the abominable video for a song called "Monster" are covered in topical depth. The rest of the guys recount their roots from a half-assed Syracuse band to playing for 120,000 people in Colombia, and what all this amounts to is that if you take away the militancy this band espouses, they're pretty boring dudes who were in a pretty overrated band. Case in point: there is nothing entertaining about hotel room antics without the use of drugs, alcohol, or prostitutes. Take it from me, I know. Hey, I'm all for the digital revolution and the power to put the power of media construction into anyone's hands. However, I fear that this DVD was merely a case of some people with adequate DVD production skills and marginal content with which to work. I hope other record labels do not follow the lead set by Trustkill and Victory and start releasing shoddy products like this merely because it will most definitely sell well. With that said, I'm sure a few people will shell out the \$20 to see this thing. And, I do know a few intelligent people who like(d) this band. But, if you're on the fence my advice to you is to stay away from documentaries about bands whose members are simply militant boy scouts. RS

**Johnny Thunders and the Heartbreakers "Dead or Alive" (Jungle) DVD**—Though there are a slew of posthumous Johnny Thunders audio recordings flooding the market these days, I haven't seen too many examples with visual accompaniment. This film is being hailed as "The Last Rock n' Roll Movie," and while that's debatable (anybody see *Rock Star?*), it captures Thunders at his most vulnerable—trying to cope with a painful addiction and simultaneously keep a smile on his face. This also displays the two sides of Thunders' art—he's provoking the audience to fistfights one moment and playing a tender acoustic ballad like "You Can't Put Your Arms Around a Memory" the next. Originally taped in 1976, the Heartbreakers play all the classics like "Chinese Rocks," "Too Much Junkie Business," and even an impromptu cover of Bob Dylan's "Like A Rolling Stone." Anyone who listens to the New York Dolls will recognize the sloppy and soulful guitar soloing as Thunders and bandmate Jerry Nolan trade blues-based pentatonic riffs like 5<sup>th</sup> graders trade baseball cards. The rhythm section is mostly inaudible, it doesn't really matter—the Heartbreakers were always all about their frontman anyway. Spliced between live performances is footage of a sort of movie, the plot revolving around Thunders well-documented drug addiction and the shady practices of their management. However, I thought the most interesting part of the DVD was an interview from 1984, and when watching it, I couldn't help but feel pity for this raucous rocker. Though they had similar extracurricular hobbies, this guy was no Sid Vicious, and it was clear he was trying to get his life back on track in the painful years before his demise. Thunders shrugs off repeated questions involving his drug use and it's almost disgusting the way the interviewer won't stop pestering him about his tumultuous past. In the end, Thunders tells the kids to stay off drugs and fiddles with the microphone on his collar before the video fades to black. As we all know, Thunders passed over a decade ago, but this DVD is a document of the raw talent and charismatic charm of this oft forgotten punk rock icon. We'll miss you Johnny. JB

**Rage: 20 Years of Punk Rock (Music Video Distributors) DVD**—This video is the reason why the personal computer revolution may not have been such a great idea. The PC revolution in part allowed any monkey with the will to be his or her own media mogul—any person that wants to make a video can. But, there's a reason why there's only one Steven Spielberg... because talent and focus should not be underestimated. This video, comprised of hopelessly unprofessional, irrelevant, and unfocused interviews with such old school punk rockers as Jack Grisham of TSOL, Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys, Keith Morris of the Circle Jerks and Black Flag, and Don Bolles who is best known for playing drums for the Germs (and having the worst teeth to ever grace the silver screen). To top it off there are more interviews with Duane Peters of the US Bombs (who seems like a seriously strange dude) and Gitane Demone of a "death rock" band called Christian Death. Combine some very uninteresting interviews with some fancy motion graphics and screenings at independent theaters around the nation you get *Rage*. I think a good sub-title would be "has-beens who still can make a buck promoting what they did 25 years ago." There you have it. I want that hour and a half out of my life back. RS

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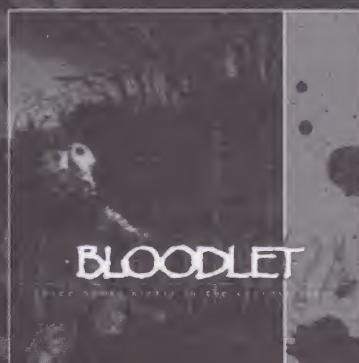
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—Revolver Magazine

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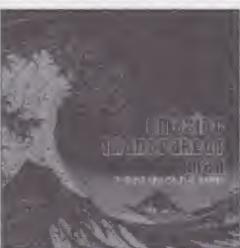
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### Jason Webley

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# Information Overload: Zine Reviews

## Alarm #12 (\$3 glossy-cover/offset)

You know, I'm getting kind of bored of this zine. It looks slick, the writing isn't too bad, and they've even got some nifty color pages featuring Saves the Day and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club. The problem is that this zine is so sterile. Not in the *Skyscraper Magazine* disaffected-rock-critic way but rather in the this-zine-has-no-personality way. As much as Fat Bastard Andy would like to you to get to know he and his staff beyond the level of reader and editor, the fact that every page looks as clean as a laboratory, and the abundance of silly *Alarm Press* apparel for sale simply makes me wonder if they are content to be an underground magazine with limited distribution, or if they are just saving their money and biding their time until they can move up to a full color magazine and be placed on the shelf next to such wonderful publications as *Alternative Press* and *Kerrang*. To be honest, it's nice to see a zine with such professionalism. God knows *LOI* could use some of their efficiency. However, I would be surprised if these guys aren't living off this the money they make from *Alarm*— and there is certainly something to say for a zine that can do this (for instance, they might make certain stylistic compromises in order to appeal to a wider audience as well as be able to produce 6 issues a year, which for *LOI* would be completely and totally impossible): But, it is nice to see bands like Bluetip, American Steel, and Milemarker in the same magazine as Jurssic 5 or the X-ecutioners, which one would see in almost no other American magazine. In short, *Alarm* is a good read and for some might be an essential part of their monthly zine buying sprees. For me, it is a bit like reading an indie version of *CMJ* or Tower Records' *Pulse*. (PO Box 200069 Boston, MA 02120) RS

## Hit it or Quit it #16 (color-cover/newsprint)

As time goes by *Hit it or Quit it* becomes harder and harder to classify and to describe. Over the last 6 issues, the articles have become stranger, the interviews have become less standard (sometimes the standard interview format isn't a bad thing), and the layout begins to suck more. The zines' saving grace is that its editor, Jessica Hopper, is smarter, savvier, and wittier than almost any other editor in the punk rock zine world. Take the Cave-in interview for example. Ms. Hopper is Cave-in's manager, yet she still finds it humorous to fuck with the band in the interview in a way that most publicists would find to be off limits. Articles on how to start a tribute band, although not quite living up to a recent article on Guns 'n' Roses tributes in the New York Times, were pretty cool, as were the remainder of a Locust discussion that has been causing turmoil amongst the *Hit it or Quit it* ranks for some time now. Overall, the two best parts of *Hit it or Quit it* are the way the zine draws you in and makes you feel like you're part of the joke or that you and Jessica are friends, and the way the zine manages to be very popular all over the country in many different scenes yet has the feel of a small cut-and-paste zine that never quite made it out to Minneapolis. If you haven't checked out *Hit it or Quit it* then you're missing out on a style of zine making that none of the popular punk publications, like *MR* or *Punk Planet*, are in any way familiar with. Jessica has her ear to the ground and focuses on music that many other zines disregard. In addition, the zine takes unexpected viewpoints in their content that many other zines wouldn't dare to do themselves. Overall, not as good an effort as past issues, but this zine is always a pleasure to read. And, if you love zines like I do then you will love *Hit it or Quit*

it. This is experimental. (PO Box 14624 Chicago, IL 60614) RS

## Holy Shit #2 (Xerox)

It is surprisingly rare how seldom we get zines like this in the mail— low budget, low print-quality zines that were probably laid out with a copier machine and a stick of glue. I guess most kids who do zines like this aren't concerned with selling them in Tower Records or garnering hundreds of records for review consideration each issue, therefore they feel no need to send their zines to other zines for praise. Rather, they are happy to simply make something they worked hard on. *Holy Shit* is different though. They did send in their zine for review— they do want our opinion. Yet Eric, the zine's editor, clearly isn't looking to make *Holy Shit* into the next *Punk Planet*. For one, he probably will never be able to afford a print run as large and impressive as *Punk Planet* since he refuses to "prostitute out" his zine to the "hottest" labels and their new merchandising schemes. He claims he is "not for sale" on the back cover of the zine as a sort of just-in-case-you-didn't-notice-but-I'm-DIY. I must admit, I admire Eric's stubbornness, hell I'm no fan of advertising either but it does pay the bills. But, with a name like *Holy Shit* it's unlikely we're going to be seeing this zine gracing the magazine rack at even the least respectable book or magazine store. With that said, *Holy Shit* isn't half bad. The zine is Eric's attempt to "let people know that Christianity and progressive sociopolitical thought are not mutually exclusive." A noble goal that someone should mention to the Catholic church right now. Thankfully we are spared all that WWJD stuff and we are treated to some interesting and lengthy interviews with Stretch Armstrong (who seem to be a bit too conventional for their own good), The Assistant, By the Grace of God (who broke up over two years ago ironically enough), and Blue Skies Burning. Oh yeah, Eric is a history teacher— as we see from his student teacher journal which is actually a very refreshing idea for a music zine— and all of his interviews focus around teachers in some way, and Eric pulls it off better than most theme issues I see from other zines. Well, good luck finding this thing, but if you happen to be in Michigan and a bespectacled young man offers you his zine with a foul name, offer him a buck and take it (note: if Eric is a hypocrite then he will take the buck. If not... not. Offering him the dollar bill is a test of his credibility. Please report back on your findings.) (1015 Worden St. SE Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507) RS

## Interference Magazine Vol 2, Issue 5 (Free glossy Cover/newsprint)

It's always a nice surprise to see kids from your hometown putting out a quality product. I had never heard of this zine before, but it's based out of a suburb of Cleveland and contains interviews with Rye Coalition, Rival Schools, Liars Academy, DMS (in the indie band not the Madball crew), and Brandtson, in addition to reviews, articles, and the typical zine fanfare. I think the best part about this zine is the multiple viewpoints on all of their reviews. For example, on show reviews, they'll have two writers talk about the same show so you can really get a good sense of the perspective and see how we all experience music in different ways. Ditto for the lengthy and well-written record reviews. While I didn't really care very much about the bands interviewed, the questions were probing and got into the processes of

making the music instead of sticking to the "where did you guys get your name from?" type of meaningless zine banter. Also, the Mad Lib done by And You Will Know Us By the Trail of Dead is hilarious, and worth the cover price alone...With fiction, a profile on File 13 records, and columns, there is really something for everyone in this zine; and even if you're not a fan of the bands they cover, you can turn to virtually every page and find something worth reading in this impressive publication. (Mike Hammer 4722 Fleharty Rd. North Olmsted, OH 44070) JB

## Jaded in Chicago #13 (free glossy-cover/offset)

There are only so many punk bands based out of Chicago, but if they're any good (and even if they aren't) you can bet that *Jaded in Chicago* will be covering them. The new issue features interviews with Rise Against, Haymarket Riot, The Fairlanes, Plain White T's and punk's newest darlings, Saves the Day. It also has sections spotlighting local bands, coffeehouses, websites, as well as record reviews, comics and some miscellaneous ramblings. This issue is much more impressive than the last few issues I've seen in just about every category and if you live in Chicago I would say reading this zine is damn near essential. Plus, it's free, so there's really no excuse not to pick this up to find out what's happening in Bulls territory. My only qualm with this zine is that it focuses primarily on pop-punk and tends to ignore other genres of music all together, but definitely a worthy edition nonetheless. An engaging read for people interested catching a glimpse into Chicago punk scene beyond heavyweights like the Alkaline Trio. (c/o Bill Denker 4031 Forest Ave. Western Springs, IL 60558) JB

## Muddle #19 (\$3 color cover/newsprint)

I remember way back in the late '90s, there were a handful of zines that everyone looked up to and every zine editor envied. When you bought a zine like *Nothing Left*, *Second Nature*, *Eventide*, *Change*, *Rumpshaker*, or *Muddle*, you knew you were getting the apex of hardcore— of emotional and metal varieties— in written format for your perusal. Each zine had a certain style or scene they championed: for *Muddle* is was Long Island, for *Second Nature* it was the midwest, for *Rumpshaker* it was New York city, etc., and people like myself literally discovered bands like Silent Majority, Braid, and the Get Up Kids in the pages of these zines. You took what they had to say as gospel as you trusted their musical intuition and knowledge. Here we have issue #19 of *Muddle* which is early into the second era of this zinedom stalwart. My first response is that this hefty magazine is a drastic improvement over their easily-overlooked 17th issue, and my second impression is that this is hardly the same zine I came to love years ago— for both better and worse. Better because they're growing up. They rarely cover hardcore, much less Long Island, anymore, and they've surely moved onto the hipper forms of indie (and mainstream) rock than from where they came from. Worse, because looking at their zine from where I sit now— as opposed to where my vantage point used to be— I have to say that they seem to have replaced a love of certain bands and certain styles of music for bigger, better publicized outfits. The end result— often not their fault, I suspect— is that the interviews are short, uninformative, and somewhat rushed. There are notable exceptions in this issue like the fantastic Converge, Mission of Burma (thank God), San

Diego's Casbah club, and Beulah. However, the Rufus Wainwright, Slayer, Grade, and MC Hammer interviews, while admittedly cool, are not very good discussions. Nonetheless, any punk rocker or indie beanpole should purchase a copy of *Muddle* every time it comes out. If you like to support independent literature, *Muddle* is a great place to start (even if they seem less and less likely to cover independent music). (PO Box 120289 San Diego, CA 92112) **RS**

#### **The New Scheme #5** (free newsprint)

The New Scheme is a good zine and after five issues, it's finally started to discover its own identity. Aside from the Dismemberment Plan (does anyone really need to read another interview with band?), interviews with The Flashing Astonishers, Time Spent Driving, Engine Down, and Ping are a good cross-section of excellent bands that most zines don't have the good sense to cover. The columns kept my interest, the reviews look like they had a lot of time put into them, the simplistic *Punk Planet*-esque template layout works, and speaking of *PP*, the book review of *PP* columnist Joel Schalit's "Jerusalem Calling" made me want to run out and buy his book before I put down the magazine. I like the fact that while the interviews are fairly serious, there is a sort of goofiness underlying the writing to keep the reader engaged. Unless you're a fan of River City High (the editor offers free issues for kids creatively destroying RCH records and posters), drop your pretensions and pick this up, (The New Scheme, PO Box 19873, Boulder, CO 80308) **JB**

#### **No One Touches the Dream Team #6** (quarter size/offset)

This is the zine I would make myself if other people actually thought I was funny—luckily, the editor for *NOTDT* doesn't care what other people think. "Sure, this is really sophomore and offensive, but it's so well written and off-the-wall that you can't help but laughing at it. Personal standouts included the quiz (sample question: Do you like drinking soda? 1 point—Such a question cannot be answered without severe meditation and years of solace and solitude to truly understand the biochemical implications. 2 points—Captain Pancake will mess you up. 3 points—"Does the Pope shit in the woods?"), sticker reviews and...you know what, forget it. If you didn't laugh at the sample quiz question don't bother with this zine. But if you did, and want more of it, track down this zine and read it from cover-to-cover again and again and again like I did. *No one Touches the Dream Team* is an understatement—no one even comes close. (P.O. Box 19561, Boulder, CO 80308-2561) **JB**

#### **Rockist #3** (free offset)

I think I read the first issue of this zine, and while it has improved boatloads since its debut I still hate the way this is bound. It's held together with those gold hinged-type things I used on book reports in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. While these were good for a book report on *A Separate Peace*, lately I've found random pages off *Rockist* all over my room. Like I need this shit. Seriously. Aside from that, it's amazing how quickly this zine has grown up. This issue contains interviews with Rocket From the Crypt, *Big Takeover*'s Jack Rabid, Kill Creek, Actionslacks, Seven Storey Mountain, and 163 record reviews, all done by this zine's overworked editor. And these aren't two sentence reviews that don't really tell you anything a la *Punk Planet*—these are well written, objective reviews complete with lyrical snippets and

multiple paragraphs. Wow. All of the band interviews were nice, but I found the most interesting interview to be with Jack Rabid, the human encyclopedia of punk rock. Jack's answers are so lengthy that he only answers a handful of questions within the three-page span of this interview, but it's really inspiring to read about how Mr. Rabid's magazine has evolved, and, as an editor myself, how he has managed to keep it afloat for 20 years. The only thing that this magazine is missing is a personal touch. The introduction and the philosophical quotes on the inside jacket give us a glimpse inside the editor's persona, but I'd really like to see this kid put more of himself into this magazine since it must encompass nearly all of his free time. That, and I'd like him to justify the text in the reviews section. But besides this qualms, this is a mighty impressive little magazine that I'm guessing will only improve with subsequent issues (if it follows all of my advice, that is). (Kevin S. Hoskins, 539 Washington Street #2, Brighton, MA 02135) **JB**

#### **The Secretlife of Pirates #1** (free offset)

The problem with this magazine is that the editor has good intentions but the worst taste in music ever. Let me give you some sample sentences from a few reviews:

Finch - "What can I say except, amazing."

Recover- "Fueled By Ramen puts out the best shit ever!"

Stryder- "This shit is better than Saves The Day!"

I don't have a problem with giving positive reviews, but this kid lives in some parallel universe where generic pop-punk reigns supreme. I don't ever want to live in that universe. Also, the whole pirate motif is pretty played, just ask Piebald. I was looking forward to reading about the conquests of Black Beard and instead I got a bunch of interviews with hardcore bands from Arizona. Let's face it, raping and pillaging is a lot more exciting than reading an interview with a group of teen-agers that have played three shows. This issue features Poison the Well, The Black Tie Affair, I Like Girls, The Bled, Drawing Down the Sun, and a few more bands (aside from the Well) that you haven't heard of. Don't get me wrong, it's great this kid is actually getting off his ass and creating a zine dedicated to promoting his scene, and to that I give him kudos. However, to be brutally honest, the writing is subpar, the interview questions are formulaic, and his "rants," while understandably rambling, don't seem to ever reach semblance of a point. The good news is the editor is looking for contributors and maybe with some good writers, more direction, and a rudimentary knowledge of pirates, this could be worth reading. **JB**

#### **Stay Free! #18** (\$3.95 color cover/offset)

I like reading zines, however normally they don't really teach me anything except why a band signed to a certain record label or what the guitarist's favorite Star Wars character is. Fair enough. However, *Stay Free!* taught me more about the subversive nature of advertising than any of the classes I took in college—and I was a communications major. This isn't really a zine, it's a magazine, and the comprehensive content reflects it. This issue focuses on why history is skewed by corporate interests; and even if you've read every book by Howard Zinn on the market, *Stay Free!* presents viewpoints that are both shocking and engaging on every page. Interviews with historians, propaganda advertisements from the 1940's, and the Top Ten Embarrassing Moments in Textbook History are just a few features that encompasses this lengthy

publication. Sure, it's a bit strange that the first ad in the magazine is none other than Virgin Records (who is owned by EMI) but this ain't *Abusters*, and we all gotta pay the bills. Power to the people. (P.O. Box 306, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012) **JB**

#### **SwingSet #1** (\$4 color-cover/ offset paper)

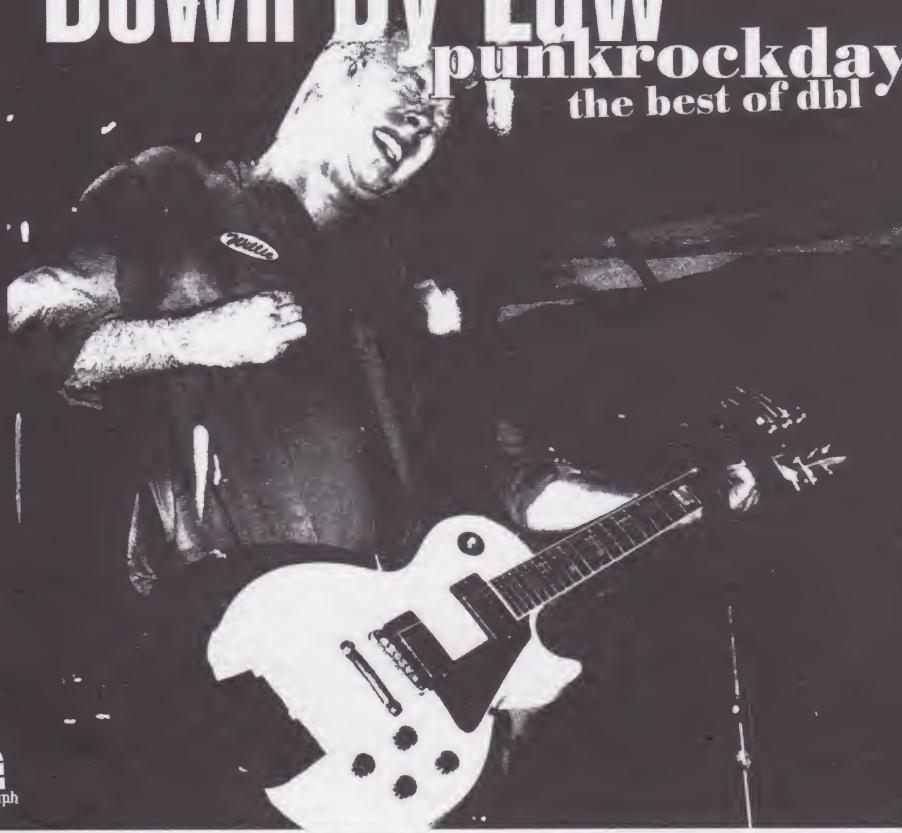
It's rare, and a tad bit off-putting, to see the premiere issue of a magazine that has put so much money into the printing in the underground. It's clear that the kids who edit this aren't new the game though, and the layouts of interviews with bands like Mogwai, Lightning Bolt, and Unwound which use lots of space and artsy looking (read: blurry) pictures are as good as in any other magazine on the shelves. My problem, however, is more editorial. While I realize that Ross and I have college educations - as do many people who listen to "challenging" bands like Mogwai (and this is not a cut on one of my favorite bands around) - I felt like the writers for this magazine may alienate lesser educated readers by throwing around big words and trying to sound smarter than they really are. The Q & A's aren't what I'm talking about, it's more in the reviews and band articles where words like phrases like, "...the singer employs the kind of monotonous screeching that causes one to dread whatever cynic-chic 'emotional' nonsense he's lamenting," seems a bit heavy-handed for a review of *Strike Anywhere*, don't you think? On the other hand, they have columns like "Games My Father Played," a silly recollection of monopoly and basketball. Admittedly, the writers for this zine are very talented and know a great deal about what they are writing about, I just think they need to figure out if they want to be Robert Christgau or Bart Simpson. I'm voting for the latter. (SwingSet, 532 LaGuardia Place #102, New York, NY 10012) **JB**

#### **Verbicide #8** (\$3.50 glossy-cover/newsprint)

*Verbicide* is one of the few young zines I've seen today that is doing something different from the trail *MRR* and *Punk Planet* have already blazed. As I see it, they are just as obsessed with art and literature as they are with music. While some obvious drawbacks may be that they really can't tell what constitutes good literature and what makes for filler, but they're well on their way to sorting out these difficulties. In my conversations with the zine's editor, Jackson, we talk about a certain line between doing a zine for yourself and doing it for your readers. Right now, some of the self-indulgent content in *Verbicide*, like their publication of a Ray Bradbury story which by their own admission is one of his "most reprinted stories," the very masturbatory and myopic article on Enron, and the boring Grade interview, show they have some work to do before they find their own, interesting voice. But the Ian Mackaye interview is lengthy and informative which is a rare feat these days. Similarly the interview with Dischord Records employee and photographer extrodinnaire, Cynthia Connolly, is a good look at one of the most staunch DC scenesters of which you've never heard. I think this zine has lots and lots of potential. However, they should decide whether they think the same kids who want to read about Grade (possibly the most over-the-hill band in punk rock) want to read responses to stories by second rate authors like Bradbury and, well, poetry. Check this out. It's better than I made it seem. (Scissor Press PO Box 206512 New Haven, CT 06520) **RS**

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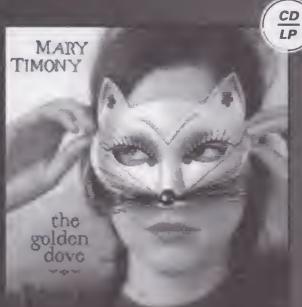
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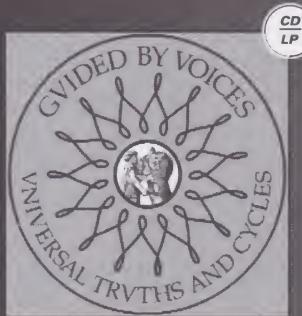
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# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: RS | Jonah Bayer: JB | Jason Murphy: JM | du prospicio: dup | Adam Parks: AP |

Jonah Brucker-Cohen: JBC | Tyler Bussey: TB | Celeste Tabora: CT | Nick Twisp: NT

1

**90 Day Men "To Everybody" (Southern Records)**- Chicago's 90 Day Men seem to be delving into psychedelics. Take the first track ("I've Got Designs On You") for instance. It causes me to loosely recall - and recoil from - the abstract ways of the Doors and/or Faith No More. The drumming is aboriginal and primitive, the vocals prowl like panthers in an unexplored jungle. The piano work is elementary; just following the vocal line for most of the song. By the fourth track, the album becomes more approachable. Named "We Blame Chicago," the song is entirely instrumental with pauses and crashes in apt places amongst flowing piano playing. There are a few other impressive parts throughout the album, but not enough to give this effort the blue ribbon. There are some great ideas, with questionable follow-through. If you're looking for accessible listening, don't look expect too much from this album. However, if it's complexity you yearn for— this is your ticket to happiness. CT

**1208 "Feedback is Payback" (Epitaph)**- Reviewing an Epitaph record can easily turn into a review of the label rather than the rock group at hand, because the label has a personality (one that it has built often at the expense of its bands) and the individual bands on the label (with several exceptions) have none. How appropriate (and possibly ironic) that 1208 is named after a number, since you can just chalk them up as another one of Epitaph's interchangeable and expendable parts. And how typical that this CD should come in a mass-produced Epitaph sleeve, with no information about the band or the album whatsoever. I already knew, just like you already know, what this CD sounded like before even putting it in. And I already know, just like you already know, that I will not be putting it in again, ever. AP

**The Aeffect "A Short Dream" (Fueled by Ramen) EP**- Unless you've been living under a rock (and recently I have, so there's no shame in admitting it), you're probably aware that the 80's-electro-new-wave revival has gotten big, big, big. Out-of-proportion big, to the point where bands like Fischer's Spooner are getting \$3 million dollar contracts and self-appointed style magazines that once tripped over one another to proclaim electro "the next big thing" are now trying to compensate for its unexpected burst in popularity by pretending it's already become passe. But with all the flashy, style-over substance groups hogging the limelight, certain more subtle groups like the Aeffect that have been reappropriating the 80's

in more interesting ways have largely gone unnoticed. Closer in their sound to the New Order-style pop of Soviet than the robotic pyrotechnics of Brooklyn's vaunted electroclash bands, the Aeffect play mid-tempo, dramatically overwrought pop-songs in a minor chord that bring to mind the "new romantic" sounds of the Cure or Depeche Mode. Fueled by Ramen is taking a chance by releasing the Aeffect's first EP, which is worlds away from the spastic pop-punk the Florida label is known for. At times, I'm inclined to think they've made a bad choice; at their slowest and plainest, the Aeffect merely plod along, never building up enough momentum to engage the listener. But at other times their songs have a touchingly nostalgic edge, and for a moment, if I close my eyes, I can pretend I'm a fourteen year old wearing black lipstick and crying along to the beat. [guest reviewer: Dan Frantic]

**Alkaline Trio/Hot Water Music (Jade Tree)**- I must admit I am far more familiar with the recent works of the Alkaline Trio than Hot Water Music; the former releasing what in my opinion is the only classic album on Vagrant Records to date, with the latter falling off my radar somewhere around the time of *No Division*'s release. While I feel it is important to note that I generally hate split CDs, since they usually suffer from quality compromise due to brevity, this CD maintains my unabashed love for the Trio and makes me a bit more interested in checking out recent HWM. The Alkaline Trio, give three songs to this release, the last being a song called "Rooftops" which is up there with the best in the band's arsenal. HWM give four songs that are just as catchy, pissed-off, and anemic as anything I've heard from them since *Forever and Counting*. While I wouldn't say this is essential to everyone's collection, if you are a fan of either of these two bands—and I know some of you are rabid collectors—you will not want to miss this anomaly of a split CD. RS

**American Analog Set "Know By Heart" (TigerStyle)**- *Know By Heart* is another great release from a band that keeps maturing after every album. After two unproductive years, AAS are almost there with this record - they hit the right chords, sing the perfect verses, and provide ultra-catchy choruses that keep you humming along. Yet, there's still something missing in their sound that could be classified as pain, anguish, or maybe even wit. The more you listen, the more you realize that AAS write songs to be heard - they are well crafted, cleanly produced, and evoke just enough emotion to make you nostalgic. Their weakness is the rough side of songwriting, or the elements that make you want to feel sorry for them because you can relate to their grief. "Punk as Fuck" is the perfect antidote for its namesake as one of the prettiest ballads I've ever heard. The steady verse of "Million Young" recalls a steady march towards independence in a field of uncertainty. As AAS continue to expand their musical frontiers, this LP adds another winning notch to their triumphant songwriting belt. JBC

**AM/FM "Getting Into Sinking" (Polyvinyl)**- I really think that the only people who like AM/FM are their friends, and they prove they have some pretty notable ones with their second record, *Getting Into Sinking*. I really didn't like the band's first record, but I remember reading

someone raving about the new album on their website so I thought I'd give it a listen. The raving turned out to be from Atom and his package aka Adam Goren who plays organ on a few of the tracks. Additionally, Tim Owen from Jade Tree fame took the pictures, and another half-dozen guest performers who were all probably in bands you heard of grace this recording. Unfortunately, none of them can save this from being self-indulgent Beach Boys plagiarism. It's not that this is as bad as the new *Sensefield* album or anything; it's just so unbelievably forgettable that it's hard for me to imagine that anyone would rave about this unless they were A) in the band B) Played on the record or C) Buddies with the band D) Really liked Franklin, and were in denial that the defunct dub-rockers were a much much more innovative band than Brian Sokel's new project could ever hope to be. JB

**And You Will Know us by The Trail of Dead "Source Tags & Codes" (Interscope)**- The easiest comparison for *And You Will Know Us by The Trail of Dead* is At the Drive-In. In fact, it's almost too easy. Both bands were bred in the Texas heat, both have the ability to create fashion trends, and both have become as well known for their live shows as for their brazen recordings (to split hairs, *Trail of the Dead* is more about breaking things than onstage acrobatics.) However, this isn't to suggest that these two acts are identical beyond these aesthetics... but more on that later. As expected, the album's first single, "Another Morning Stoner," isn't the album's strongest track. But it is a fairly good representation of the band's sound or lack thereof. The haunting minor-key guitar riff is tempered with the machine-gun-like snare fills, and vocals that lie somewhere in between, both holding the song together and diverting as its own instrument. Then comes a beautiful orchestral breakdown, more machine-gun action on the toms, and back to the beginning. In my opinion, the mid-tempo numbers like "Stoner," "Heart in the Hand of the Matter" and the album's best tune, "How Near, How Far," are where *Trail of Dead* really shine but that doesn't mean that they should be penalized for their eclecticism. With its swinging tempo, chromatically climbing chord progression, and exaggerated bravado, "Baudelaire" sounds like Iggy Pop singing some type of acid-rock show tune, while the shifting rhythms and pained vocals during "Relative Ways" bring to mind a more conventional Fugazi. But, in *Trail of Dead*'s antithetical nature, to temper the song's MacKaye-inspired frenzy, there is the "Relative Ways Segue," a gentle piano ballad that paves the way for the album's most commercially viable song, its title track. And is it my imagination or does it remind me of Oasis? Let's be realistic, it's hard enough to create a distinct sound in one particular genre, so when you're zigzagging all over rock n' roll's varied landscape it shouldn't come as a surprise that *Trail* borrows heavily from other artists. And that brings us back to ATDI. The album's fourth track, "Homage," is just that. *Trail of the Dead*'s singer sounds as if he's mimicking Cedric Bixler with his can't-even-stop-between-sentences-to-catch-my-breath urgency, and I distinctly remember hearing the introductory guitar riff on one of the Hell Pasc's finest albums, maybe *In/Casino/Out*.

But *Trail of Dead*'s thievery isn't limited to just their neighbors; aside from Fugazi and Iggy, even hints of avant-garde rockers like Mike Patton manage to leak their way into their curious hodgepodge. In the end, I think the suits are gonna be disappointed. Aside from their wordy moniker (how will it fit into those tiny columns in the Billboard charts?), *And You Will Know Us by The Trail of Dead*'s sound isn't accessible enough for your average TRL freak. The songs aren't obvious in their nihilism and instead of easily recognizing the faux emotion nu-metalers wear on their sleeve, the listener has to probe the layers of the sound. But for those of us who are willing to probe *Trail of the Dead*'s enigmatic persona and dig a little deeper, it's well worth the effort. JB

**The Anniversary "Your Majesty" (Vagrant)**- I love this album. The guitars, keys and bass flows like wind through the cornfields of their hometown of Lawrence, Kansas. The drums accentuate the song's feeling with timely pauses and heavy hits. The vocal style is so earnest you just may feel that the song is being sung for you and you alone. The composer partnership of Reolofs/Berwanger provides pop perfection reminiscent of Lennon/McCartney (they must know that, because the cover looks like *The Beatles Revolver*.) I've heard snippets of past Anniversary releases, but this one— this one takes the cake. It's straight-up pop music, the kind that you can imagine Jan Brady bopping her head to while smiling naively behind her wretched braces. It's a feel good disc. We, the listeners, need more of this kind of upbeat, positive-but-not-cheesy music. Think: *Rentals* minus cynicism or *Apples In Stereo* minus weirdness. CT

**The Anniversary / Superdrag (Vagrant Records)**- So today I bought 60 dollars worth of CDs, only to get home to discover that nothing I purchased had been recorded after 1979. (Okay, so technically the live Springsteen box was recorded from '75-85, but that totally ruins my segue into the record review, so we'll overlook the '75 rendition of "Thunder Road" for right now.) I don't know if they made better music then or what; I'm just obsessed with the classics right now. It seems The Anniversary are too. Understandably fed up with the obligatory Get Up Kids comparisons, the band apparently decided to abandon their cheesy Casio-driven emocore stylings and raid their parent's record collections. Although the genre shift is a pleasant change, their sound is no less derivative than it was before -this time it just drips of John, Paul, George and Ringo. From the production tricks to the background falsettos, even the chord progressions, these tunes sound like, well, cover songs. (Especially the third track, "Up in the Sky," which poses the question, "Hey, who's up there? Could it be...Lucy?") Luckily, where the Anniversary falters, Superdrag—yes, that Superdrag—proves that retro doesn't have to be synonymous with redundancy. Though the trio obviously listen to boatloads of the Who and Cheap Trick, they are still able to add their own distinct flavor to the classic rock mix. It's the little things that

## 2

matter: faint guitar subtleties, extraneous percussion, and a healthy analog buzz ultimately fuel Superdrag's cohesive conglomeration of musical

decades. It's a dichotomy that the Anniversary clearly have the potential of developing, that is if they can decide what style of music they want to play. Or, better yet, maybe they'll discover their own. JB

**Arma Angelus "Where Sleeplessness is Rest from Nightmares" (Eulogy)**- This is stupid. First, the singer sounds like an angry version of Cookie Monster from Sesame Street. And not in a good way. Second, I can't tell how many guitar tracks are in each song, but it sounds like close to ten or twelve. This is too many. Due to the hyper-guitarification of the recording, none of the hits are tight, none of the punchy parts are punchy, and all of the chord progressions sound washed-out. Third, the lyrics seem to have only been inspired by the last two Converge records and maybe that Poison the Well record that everyone seemed to like so much. If this band opened for a real band, you would say, "Hey, that opening band wasn't too bad." And your friend would say, "They were alright. You didn't buy their CD did you?" And you would say, "Hell no, dude. I'm saving money for Denny's on the way home. I heard they have Boca burgers now." AP

**As Friends Rust "A Young Trophy Band in the Parlance of Our Times" (Equal Vision) EP**- Saying that As Friends Rust's latest release is a departure from their previous records goes without saying – but who knew they'd get all rap-metal on us? More amazingly, who knew they'd be able to pull it off? AFR's final release with frontman Damien Moyal is an amalgam of all of the styles they've experimented with in the past, and an impressive one at that. "More than just music, it's a hairstyle" displays the poppier side evident on their excellent full-length *Won*; The nu-metal flavored tirade, "The Most Americanist," displays a new side of the band with Moyal sounding strangely like the frontman for Type O Negative (?); while "Born with a Silver Spoon up Your Ass" is classic AFR, complete with emphatic half-sung-half-spoken-vocals and palatable aggression via crunchy guitar gusto. Though you might snicker upon the first listen of this EP (like my a few of my friends did), these songs grow on you like a cyst thanks to Moyal's distinctive voice and the keen sense of melody these kids have – whether it's a gentle piano ballad or a breakdown reminiscent of Moyal's previous act, *Morning Again*. Without their frontman, it's doubtful that AFR will be able to function at this level, but their final release is a testament to Moyal's vision...as well as his vocabulary. (Paging Mr. Graffin: does anyone know what "parlance" means?) JB

**Aspera "Birds Fly" (Suicide Squeeze) EP**- Philadelphia's Aspera (once known as Aspera Ad Astra) produced an EP that leaves me at a loss for words. This follow-up to their last LP, *Sugared and Feathered*, is beautiful, yet somewhat slightly creepier and otherworldly than the band's past releases. Though Aspera travel off into the world of ethereal and even somewhat religious sounds (a la My Bloody

Valentine), once stripped down - the songs are undoubtedly pop at the core, even though live drums are almost extinct on this effort. Organ, synth, and countless other artificial sounds dominate the album. For fans of The Flaming Lips and Cocteau Twins, definitely. CT

**The Atari Star "And other smaller, brighter worlds" (Johann's Face)**- Big deal. The lyrics on this album are great, but after that, the greatness stops. Part of the failure of this record is owed to the fact that it is layered all wrong. The drums are mixed very low, so that they are a kind of backdrop to the music, and are never really given the chance to drive a song (this is true except for the hi-hat, which is way too loud and goes "click click click click", detracting from entire songs because it is so annoying). The guitars are also mixed very low, way beneath the keyboards; which seem to preside over the whole recording, yet never do anything that really warrants their reign. My advice to The Atari Star is to throw away all the instruments, go back to where you threw them and get the acoustic guitar back and rewrite the songs as folk songs. When you've got a good thing going for you (i.e. great lyrics), it's best to play-down the fact that you're not musically gifted, rather than overshadow your talents with amateurish recording and shoddy musicianship. Good luck. AP

**Ativin "Interiors" (Secretly Canadian)**- Can someone find David Lynch and tell him about this band? It has that eerily-yet-beautiful, quiet and strangely comforting tone that I find so endearing. While listening to this, I'd like to be sitting in a hot spring in the middle of a snowy forest, smoking a never-ending cigarette. Ativin display guitar strums, which discordantly sway to and from the fickle strike of the drums; Special appearances by cello and viola strings bring class into a dark brooding song. This is ideal for fans of instrumental indie rock, like that of San Diego's Tristeza or Album Leaf - you must invest in this. CT

**Atom Bomb Pocket Knife "God Save the ABPK" (Southern)**- Really cool record featuring an ex-member of Thumbnail. After listening to this record a bunch of times and trying to think of how I would categorize these guys, I finally figured it out. My best comparison is that they sound much like And You Will Know Us By the Trail of the Dead. When I say this, I am not trying to say that they ripped off AYWKUBTTOTD. Where Trail of the Dead may be a bit noisier and heavier, ABPK is a bit more melodic and quirky. This is a really good record by a band that I had heard lots about, but just recently got to listen to. Southern always manages to release records by really interesting bands. NT

**Atreyu "Notes and Butterfly Kisses" (Victory)** - I think I may have said this before, but in the last few years, the line between hardcore and black metal has all but vanished. I thought it was strange to see In Flames open for Earth Crisis four years ago, but now these types of pairings are common place. Atreyu sound like a three way tie between In Flames, Glassjaw, Hatebreed. This is a really difficult record to review because there is so much variance from song to song – just when you're growing tired of the Jamie Hatebreed growl, some melodic vocal line will come in from out of nowhere; syncopated chugga-chugga riffs will be followed by three part black metal

harmonies; and taking a cue from Glassjaw, this band even has melodic "hey, we're sensitive too" parts that could be considered 'emo' if the term didn't have such a cheesy connotation. Seriously, this record has something for everyone, whether it's finger-tapping guitar riffs, Iron Maiden harmonization, or just straight up hardcore fury. Buy this or get the fuck out of the way. JB

**Audio Learning Center "Friendships Often Fade Away" (Vagrant)**- Audio Learning Center is actually an okay band. They're your average pop band with obvious indie influence. They'll either be the next thing the mainstream devours or unfortunately swallowed by their similar counterparts: Nerf Herder, Weezer, Nada Surf, Get Up Kids. There's nothing that really sets the band apart; not the power chords, nor the stereotypical 4/4 drumming, not even Mr. Vocalist's oh-so-1990's whiney style. Take "Broken," "Hand Me Downs," or "December" for examples and you'll find that ALC is one of those bands that you can grasp with just one listen of one song. You won't find any surprises here. CT

**Avenged Sevenfold "Sounding the Seventh Trumpet" (Hopeless)**- It's hard to know how seriously the members of this band expect us to take their music. On one hand we have huge, finger-tapping guitars playing over Iron Maiden-esque vocals that suggest "we are very good musicians playing very kitchy, albeit catchy, music." Then the next song sounds more like their SoCal brethren Eighteen Visions than Maiden. So you see the dilemma. Does the band expect us to take them seriously as artists who are more than adept at playing their instruments, or do they want us to laugh along at the joke as a punk/hardcore band plays 2002's version of '80s metal? Regardless, Avenged Sevenfold are very good. When they stay away from the power ballads that haunt the latter half of the record they play balls to the wall, double-bass drum filled metalcore that leans more to the rock-God side than the hardcore-pride side. I imagine these guys wear all black when they play (to lots of 17 year olds) and maybe even sport mascara every now and then. If that sounds like your bag then this is for you. For me the jury is still out. RS

**Bad Religion "The Process of Belief" (Epitaph)**- Believe me, I put this off as long as possible. I got like thirty records to review this month and this was obviously going to be the last one to go. Bad Religion are probably most popular for having founded a "punk rock empire" by exploiting and promoting the mall-friendly/WB-friendly brand of punk, so while Bad Religion holds a special place in my heart, it is the place marked "things not to be taken seriously under any circumstance". Above all else, this new record provides us with a simple lesson in irony, and not for the obvious punk-as-consumable-commodity reason. Witness track seven, heroically entitled "Kyoto Now!": a sort of half-assed environmental-ethics anthem, "Kyoto Now!" claims that "A brutal sun is rising on our sick horizon/It's in the way we live our lives exactly like the double edge of a cold familiar knife...It's never really what you own but what you threw away/And how much did you pay?". A fine and essentially true observation. So you want to read the lyrics and sing along about the evils of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions? Well, first take the exciting bonus-plastic-sleeve off of the jewel case, then remove the 30 page booklet and turn to about page 20. Now sing

along! When you are done, consider taking a page out of the booklet and writing a little note to Bad Religion on it, reminding them that paper comes from trees. Also remind them that "We can't do nothing and think that someone else will make it right". I'm certain they will understand. AP

**Bane "Give Blood" (Equal Vision)**- I haven't listened to Bane since I was in high school. Lucky for me, they sound exactly the same. And after listening to the first thirty seconds of this album, there's no debating that these kids are still bursting with exuberance. Treading the line between hardcore and metal with a keen attention to melodic motives, Bane are one of the more interesting acts I've heard in either genre as of late. To be honest, they kind of remind me of an updated version of Bold with their intricate guitar lines, heartfelt sing-alongs, and posh-core lyricism. This stuff is hard for me to listen to on recording, but live this band is a blast and their passion is refreshing in a landscape dominated by fashion and shit-talking. JB

**Bats and Mice "Believe it Mammals" (Lovitt)**- The production of this record really stands out. It's a very lush, warm sound, every element swimming in a sea of mid-tone and reverb. The vocals are also nicely placed, somewhere just below the guitars in the mix. These generally melodic rock songs borrow a bit of vibe from early Sunny Day Real Estate and sound not too distant from labelmates Engine Down. Some of the songs seem to end before they reach their full potential, but overall, the good chord progressions, great vocal melodies and rhythms and the consistent laid-back feel give this record a pretty complete personality that is its own. AP

**Beachwood Sparks "Once We Were Trees" (Sub Pop)**- Either four hipsters are trying to play country or this is a legitimate backwoods record. Comprised of Lily's drummer Aaron Sperke and Further's Brent Rademaker, the Sparks have a lot of pretty pop tangled in their country roots. These songs sound as if special attention was paid to each note. "The Sun Surrounds Me" is a nice catchy hit with lyrics that read like high school poetry: "The sun surrounds me/ And all I'm seeing is the dark times". Timid and coy, they might just have just enough gusto to make these songs stick. "Old Manatee" is as traditional country as they get with a slow number that reeks of Tennessee whiskey and wide-open starscapes. You might not be able to hear the freeways of these LA boy's hometown, but the record's production value still holds the Hollywood torch. After the first 8 songs, *Once We Were Trees* starts sounding disheveled and sobers down to a wistful mood. Nevertheless, the

# Death by Stereo

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Sparks are definitely adding a bit more cred to the slop that Sub Pop releases. JBC

**Bhopal Stiffs "1985-1989" (Harmless)**- For one of the more oft-mentioned Chicago bands of the 80's, The Bhopal Stiffs' records remain pretty obscure. Contemporaries with acts like Arsenal, Naked Raygun, Bloodsport and The Effigies, members might be more recognizable as part of the lineup of Pegboy. Larry Damore and Steve Saylor both came from this band to form Pegboy, an act who has so far recorded 3 albums for Touch & Go imprint Quarterstick. Damore's round vocal bellow is pretty consistent in both bands (of course, less evolved here), and he plays guitar on this collection as well. Like Raygun, the Stiffs come off with the urgency of great 80's punk and hardcore but with an accelerated approach to songs- nice time changes, extended bass parts, and even the appearance of a harmonica. The melodic tendencies of this band are a clear precursor, with lots of vocal backups and "woah-woahs." Bhopal Stiffs sound less mechanical than Raygun's cold guitar exercises, yet with an evident connection to the beefy hardcore sound of the period more than the trebly punk of a few years earlier. The live material certainly fills out their sound more with some outstanding playing. This is unquestionably good material, probably most valuable to a Pegboy fan such as myself, but not as essential as, say Naked Raygun's *All Rise*. For having such an amazing scene in the 80's, it's astounding that Chicago gets very little recognition for its unique bands of the time. 28 tracks total with 10 live tracks from clubs or radio is packaged with a minimal insert- it lists members and a pictured discography but little more. Still, a worthwhile history lesson. dup

**Bigwig "An Invitation to Tragedy" (Fearless)**- This is super-fast hardcore with some pop-punk moments, chock-full of a little something extra, a little something that just about every pop-punk band could use a dose of at one time or another: anger. While the politics of Bigwig are somewhat drab, they wax rather passionately about religious fundamentalism (in not so many words), putting some pretty interesting and fun imagery to work. In support of the hardcore aspect of this record, the ratio of songs about politics to songs about girls is roughly 6:1. I like those odds. In the way of pop-punk, Bigwig employs some sweet vocal harmonies and some wailing NOFX-style guitar solos. No matter which of their musical personalities they are letting show through, at any given time Bigwig is a fast, energetic and fucking tight rock band. AP

**Billy Mahonie "What Becomes Before" (Southern)**- Instrumental and proud, Billy Mahonie prance delicately over the musical spectrum with an ode to both the mellow and harsh side of no-vocal rock. "I, Heston" takes country melodies to a new level by disregarding any irritating vocals that could disrupt the pure backwoods feel. In contrast, "Nacho Steals From Work" mixes noisy prog-rock with solid instrumentation and shifting dynamics. "Dusseldorf" could even be a funkier version of a Shellac ditty if only Albini was shrieking in the background about police sirens. Let these Londoners loose on an unsuspecting indie head-nodding crowd and you are sure to see some puzzled faces. Just as the rock kicks in the laid back beats take over. Despite the confusion, *What Becomes Me* actually maintains some cohesion throughout - now if only they could find a worthy singer. JBC

**Blood for Blood "Outlaw Anthems" (Victory)**- Holy shit. This is fucking awesome. First of all, these guys are so pissed. They totally hate society, which is understandable because society sucks. Also, they hate the whole world. Further, they express contempt for their generation, the human race, and something that they call "MTV babies." Their approach to helping people understand their hatred is to have listeners who don't understand them suck their dicks and/or eat their shit. Now, I know that you are probably thinking "God, that's so immature", but if you could hear the intro track of this CD, you would probably hate all of the same things that Blood for Blood hates. I know I do. I also kind of want to learn to kick-box. After the intro track, things actually calm down a little bit, mostly because the production of the album isn't really raw enough to match the hatred that it is fueled by. But as far as wasted youth brand hardcore goes, these guys have it down pat. AP

**Bloodlet "Three Humid Nights in the Cypress Trees" (Victory)** - I was never really into Bloodlet back in the day. My band opened for them once in Cleveland and the only thing I remember is that their bassist played a fretless bass which I thought was pretty slick. I can't remember exactly what they sounded like though. The first song on their Steve Albini produced comeback album sounds a lot like *Faith No More*. The vocals predominantly stick to a Mike Patton growl and the music sounds like what FNM would sound like if they were playing in Hell, mixed with the "let's see how complex of a time signature" virtuosity of the Dillinger Escape Plan. They had me until the third track when the singer did this awful nu-metal melodic singing thing and then I realized that this really just sounds like Pantera. I can appreciate the musicianship of Bloodlet and think they have the whole sludge metal thing down to a science, it's just a science I'm not interested in studying right now. JB

**Boilermaker "Leucadia" (Better Looking)**- Well, this makes all those old Boilermaker records on now defunct Goldenrod Records and Wrenched Records obsolete. Here we have a great introduction to a band that is unfortunately no longer. I'm honestly not sure if Boilermaker ever made an impact beyond their hometown of San Diego, save a few lone fans here and there like myself. However, their moody emotstylings are certainly important to the California

indie scene even if they never got as big as they should have. In my opinion songs like "Switch," "Iris," and "Pathos Delay" are some of the most powerful and melancholy songs ever to come out of Southern California. I'm glad this CD is in existence (unlike many of the records that line my closet's walls). This will find a happy home in my collection, and although I wouldn't say this is a must-have, people who think a band that combines Drive Like Jehu with one of the more interesting emo styles ever to grace the genre will probably like this a lot. RS

**Boxcar Satan "Crooked Mile March" (Dog Fingers)**- Boxcar Satan serves up thirteen tracks of blues-rooted rock tinged with Bungle-esque noise and Waits-esque whimsy, all probably best enveloped under the genre "psycho-billy", which I did not make up. Psycho-billy is like rock-a-billy, but less socially adaptable. The tracks on *Crooked Mile March* are structured enough to let you appreciate the band's songwriting skills, but are free-flowing enough that they don't stifle the feel of the individual players. Guitar, drums, voice, violin; each instrument is woven into the songs, alternately attached to and detached from the rhythm and melody at hand. The result is an honest and artful recording and an exceptional release for the band's young label. AP

**Box the Compass "Run the Easting Down" (Substandard)**- This is a good-looking record, but not that great sounding. The songs themselves are okay, but a lot of the passion in the songs is lost somewhere in the mix. The guitars and bass are both pretty weak, and the vocals sit just on top of everything, not really engaged with the music. That's not to say that there isn't apparent energy and an obvious enthusiasm on *Run the Easting Down*, just to say that it's unfortunate that the mix suppresses rather than highlights that energy. Regardless of the production, Box the Compass present seven tracks that are reminiscent of early Hot Water recordings and are easily worth the ears of any fan of growl-fronted melodic rock. AP

**Bracket "Live in a Dive" (Fat Wreck)**- Yup, this is Bracket. Believe it or not when I was a wee tyke of fifteen years old I had only seen a few punk rock shows. Back in 1993 in San Francisco I wasn't the spiritual center of punk and hardcore that I'm known as today. So, one day a friend and I went to a club to check out that band Overwhelming Colorfast (remember them? I was their only fan) and Bracket opened. Bracket were great, playing simple, likeable, and fun pop-punk. The guitars were clean, the drums were tight, and Marty's voice was perfectly high-pitched and nasal like a 20-something with too much helium in his lungs (on side note I kissed his sister about a year or two later on New Year's eve). So, yup this is Bracket. They're not super cool guys, they're certainly not good-looking rock gods, they just play catchy, honest to goodness rock. And they do it well. Recommended although you all are probably too cool for this CD. RS

**Brand New "Your Favorite Weapon" (Triple Crown Records)**- This band is no more excit-

ing live than they are on record; I went to a show they played with The Reunion Show last

summer, and can't say I was impressed. The town I live in has bred a bunch of second-rate pop-punk bands throughout the years, and I assumed that Brand New was just another one of the many. Imagine my surprise when I find out that these guys are on Triple Crown and didn't come from CT. This band is more like pop-rock than anything else. My general tendency towards pop-rock is that it's boring as hell, and for the most part, this is no exception at all. Though it can be catchy at times, it never really picks up the energy and makes me want to move my feet. And this is never a good thing. I'll admit that some of these songs are exceptions and can might get stuck in your head after a couple of listens, but in the end, there's nothing new at all about any of this. Pass. TB

**Breaking Pangea "Cannon to a Whisper" (Undecided)**- Apparently Undecided Records has a lot of good stuff in their catalog. Other than a very poorly recorded *Poison the Well* EP I haven't heard any of it. What I have heard has been generic, commonplace, and sometimes annoying. However, I see ads of theirs for records that look really cool. Why do they do press mailings on their mediocre stuff as opposed to their good stuff? Food for thought. Anyhow, the This Year's Model kids swear this band is awesome. I respect their opinion and hold them in high regard as good musicians, so when that band tells me that Breaking Pangea's guitarist is amazing, I'm inclined to believe them. Nonetheless, the guitar is low in the mix, the drums are barely lively enough to keep my awake, and the bass either plays the bare-minimum well or too much poorly. All in all, by far the most interesting track by this band, who clearly wishes Further Seems Forever and Dashboard Confessional had never made it past Miami's borders, is the intro to the first song, "Sick Day." And, by far the worst song I have heard in months is the sullen and thrown-together tune, "Turning." Go figure. This doesn't suck, but I see absolutely no reason to buy this. RS

**Bright Eyes "Lifted or The Story is in the Soil Keep Your Ear to the Ground" (Saddle Creek)**- Some records seem almost trivial to review in this type of format. Some records effect the listener so deeply that using phrases like "catchy" and "melodic" are insulting to the genius inherent in the music. Some records get listened to in their entirety every day for weeks and still don't grow stale. This is one of those records. While Conor Oberst is best known for his melancholy acoustic excursions, what hasn't been evident is how well his songs translate into an arena of more complex arrangements and diverse instrumentation, which is exactly what he does on this album. While I like some songs more than others, if I had to single-handedly point out the beauty and subtleties of each individual tune on this record, this review would fill pages. Some highlights include his Van Morrison-like repetition of the phrase, "You Will, You? Will. You? Will. You Will,"

3

## 4

during the song of the same title, which twists itself around the music like a lasso and works as a perfect counterpoint to the song's somber

introduction. There's also the steel-guitar twang and syncopated snare of "Nothing Gets Crossed Out," where the heartfelt chorus of, "So hurry up and run to the one that you love/ and blind him with your kindness/ and he'll make war oh war on who you were before/ and claim all that has spoiled in your heart," stays between your ears days after hearing the song. And, of course, there's the album's final track, "Let's Not Shit Ourselves (to Love and to Be Loved)," a ten-minute tirade against the education system, George W. Bush, Conor's insecurities, and everything else we all feel inside but can't quite express in words - or in words this poetic, at least. This sounds like a record made in a cluttered living room with a group of immensely talented friends in a small town in Nebraska. No pretense, no bullshit, all feeling - and that's what makes it so effective. JB

**Buelton "Avenue of the Flags" (Film Guerrero)**- California indie bands usually get pigeonholed as surf rock, emo, hardcore, or pseudo post-hippy noisemakers. Taking their band name from a California town outside of Santa Barbara, this west-coast quintet refuses to accept classification. Buelton trade 3-chord punk for pianos, back porch country style, and even some off-kilter prog. rock. Their multifaceted approach benefits their ability to write convincing songs because they can actually indulge in diverse musical genres without trying to have a particular "sound." Songs like the quiet "People Die" is a reminder that sometime rocking out is not the best antidote for depression. In their louder moments, "Sellblocks" plants noisy guitars against abrasive drums and rumbling bass lines. The album's winner is "Keepin' It Real" that packs a lurching guitar line next to a catchy chorus that waxes poetic about suburban street life. Listen up kids, it's time to reexamine the California soundscape. JBC

**Burn "Cleanse" (Equal Vision) EP**- So Chaka and crew are back after about eleven years and this is what they have to offer. It's a couple new songs and a couple new recordings of old songs. The thing is, so much is possible with recording and production now, that if an old staple hardcore band is going to burst back onto the scene (or even just make a cameo) after over a decade, they may as well do it with the intention of showing (or finding out) how time and technology have changed their sound/outlook/approach/whatever. No one is going to get excited about rehashed anthems that have half of the energy they did eleven years ago—even if they do have eleven year's better record-making technology to work with. And only suckers get psyched about mediocre new material from former favorite bands. This is not to say that Burn have run out of gas, just to say that the *Cleanse* EP is a big disappointment coming from a hardcore band that used to rock and used to be important to a lot of kids. Hope for better things if these guys decide to give it another go. AP

**Cable "Northern Failures" (Hydra Head)**-

A disc from Hydra Head usually comes with certain sonic assumptions- this record promptly makes them collapse. I don't know much about Cable but this record is certainly something unusual, especially for the label/ scene from which it comes from. A shockingly accessible record, from a rock standpoint, with more mid-tempo action and clear vocals than I'd almost want to admit. There's a certain darkness to Cable's sound, sounding equally harsh and somber. The well-machined transitions from modern technical metal to lurching heavy-rock stylings make this truly interesting to listen to. Very dynamic in texture, even though it finds a pattern early on in the album. A success, and certainly something I'd pass along to someone who isn't that well versed in noise-metal. Recorded, rather cleanly I might add, by Steve Austin. dup

**The Cable Car Theory "The Deconstruction" (Immigrant Sun)**- This record has a lot of great things going for it, but it somehow manages to just not matter very much. Great production, great vocals, pretty good lyrics and a forceful delivery grab your attention, but upon too close an inspection, the record as a whole just seems very shallow. It's a Quicksand-style attempt at a mature hardcore sound, surely inspired, but quick to grow old. Among the downsides that come out are banal and repetitive chord progressions, sloppy and silly drum parts, and forced-fit vocal rhythms. By the time the album is over, the only thing you're left appreciating is the vocal quality and production, and possibly the punk/hardcore ethic behind the music (if you're into that sort of thing). I guess this is the epitome of "half-way decent." AP

**Capitol City Dusters "Rock Creek" (Dischord)**- I don't like this. Here are the reasons I want to like it: 1. I didn't like the other Dischord record that I got for this issue (See El Guapo "Super/System"). 2. They sing about the revolution. But I'm not going to lie to you. I'm not excited about this record. It's just okay indie rock/pop songs with mostly stupid rhyming. The positives and negatives (and the stupid rhyming) of *Rock Creek* are summed up in a single line from its very own track four: "I've got the heart of a revolutionary but I'm singin' like a yellow canary." Problem diagnosed. Now do something exciting. AP

**Capture the Flag "Walking Away From Everything" (Conquer the World)** - If Saves the Day coined the phrase "Through Being Cool," Capture the Flag never were, and that's what makes them so great. This is partially speculation, but if they were cool, they wouldn't have spent their entire high school careers in their rooms practicing guitar and listening to punk and glam-metal records. Alternately, if they were cool they would have sound like every other emo band on the planet. Capture the Flag sounds a lot like D.C. legends Blank if Steve Harris did the arranging. The songs are based in melodic punk rock, but the jaw-dropping guitar work takes the music outside genre limitations and gives Capture the Flag a distinctive, albeit not entirely marketable, niche in the indie scene. Seriously, in between palm-muted status quo, the guitarist busts out insane solos, pinch harmonics, and Maiden-style riffs that usually fit in with the typical musing about stars. Speaking of stars, the lyrics are a bit cheesy – and once in a while the two converging genres mash like

a car crash – but for the most part, this is one of the most original contributions to the genre I've heard in a while. I doubt these guys would sound nearly this good live because there's a lot of double-tracked guitars, but with an additional guitarist and (ahem) a more reliable record label, I'm confident that Capture the Flag have summer fest-circuit potential. JB

**The Casket Lottery "Survival is for Cowards" (Second Nature)** - I've always wanted to like the Casket Lottery. Whenever someone described what they sounded like I would think, "Hey, that sounds like something I should like." So I went out and bought their album, *Moving Mountains*, and I absolutely hated it. There isn't one thing I could pin down about what didn't do it for me: I listened to it a few times, wasn't impressed, and forgot about it. I'm having the exact same problem with their latest album, *Survival is for Cowards*. I like the layout, I like the lyrics, and I like certain moments of certain songs; but for the most part, this just doesn't strike me as anything that I would listen to repeatedly. It sort of reminds me of early Grade when they sang about aliens instead of "rockin' out," combined with pop influences a la Get Up Kids. See, even this description sounds like I would probably dig this record. But I don't... go figure. JB

**Carry On "A Life Less Plagued" (Bridge Nine)**- Carry On is an excellent example of a Boston hardcore band. They play the old-school version of hardcore, adhering to a lot of prescribed elements, but overall playing with a lot more heart than most bands trying to "keep the dream alive" these days. The vocals are stronger and angrier, the drums are faster and the breaks are huger, or more huge. One thing that Carry On was unable to escape was the all-the-songs-sound-the-same phenomenon, but conversely, they did achieve the if-you-like-one-song-you-will-like-them-all marketing tactic. "A Life Less Plagued" is unsuitable for young children as every song contains the f-word. The exception to this rule regarding young children is the "hardest kids" who I learned "still put a fucking 'x' by their name." AP

**The Casualties "Die-Hards" (Side One Dummy)**- Ahhh, it feels so good to be holding a disc by these, the true punk torchbearers of NYC. Jorge has run this band for god-knows-how-many years (they formed over 15 years ago) and they're sounding better than ever. Fast, brutal street punk from a bunch of mugs who remember. If you think that punk rock is about sewing a patch onto your backpack and buying boots at a mall, go buy this album. Choice. dup

**Citizen Fish "Life Size" (Honest Don's)**- Here's a band who I always felt that I should know better. After all—Trotsky and Dick from the Subhumans, easily one of the best punk bands ever—formed this prolific and interesting act. Maybe it's because I still regret missing the Subhumans reunion tour of many years back. Their powerful sense of the dramatic never faltered over the years and this band still writes poignant and memorable songs with a ballsy, stick-to-your-guns ska/punk guitar approach. The energy of the end product eliminates the chance of the ska influence getting in the way (or sounding out of date) of these tracks. A reliable and consistently fresh reassertion of what punk rock is supposed to be. A modern punk should know this act well. dup

**Coheed and Cambria "The Second Stage Turbine Blade" (Equal Vision)**- Make it stop please! I never thought I'd say this but please take me back to 1997 when Mineral, The Promise Ring, and Jejune were huge and self-congratulatory pseudo-punk like this wasn't in vogue. I would rather hear Chris Simpson, in his Mineral days, sing off-key melodrama for the next ten years than listen to this record ever again. Specifically, C&C's brand of mid-tempo, slightly-dynamic, yearning rock and roll as sung by the singer of that one-hit-wonder Wheatus if he were rolled into one with the comic book store owner in the Simpson's, is boring, unoriginal, and derivative enough to rip off Thursday, Taking Back Sunday, and the Movielife with a shit-eating grin. One may wonder why I seem to have no mercy for the Equal Vision roster as of late. I'll tell you why: bands like Bane, Converge, American Nightmare, and Time in Malta are great hardcore bands and I don't doubt for a second that EVR knows exactly what they are doing when it comes to discovering great aggressive music. However, when they start signing bands like Prevent Falls, Fairweather, the Stryder, and C&C, who are all essentially playing the same boring style the same boring way, I have to wonder if, well, maybe they should stick to hardcore and let those flakes like Saves the Day stay fond memories. RS

**Converge "Jane Doe" (Equal Vision)**- When considering the musical history of my friends, like LOI's current co-editor, Jonah, or LOI's past co-editor, Dan Frantic, many of them take a path that can be seen as a maturation of sorts. Both people listened to more visceral, harsher music in high school and by the time they became fully ensconced in this zine they had moved on to the softer, and more complex sounds of indie rock, or in some cases alt-country. Dan and Jonah really don't listen to straight-up punk or hardcore as they once did. Rather, Jonah's favorite band is Wilco and I think Dan would be more likely to play something like Squarepusher on his stereo than Guttermouth. I think it's safe to say that my musical tastes have changed from when I was 16 or 18 as well. I am more likely to throw on a My Bloody Valentine record than a Slayer record these days, and some might call that maturation. Others might call it simply growing up. With that said, Converge are one of the few metal bands— and make no mistake, they are metal—that keep me interested and intrigued with every release. While contemporaries like Cave-in and Drowningman move onto different styles and textures, Converge are more interested in pushing limits of sonic death than seeing what they can do with a digital-delay pedal or something wussy like that. As with every Converge release, *Jane Doe* is a

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journey through the lowest reaches of hell. This band is maturing in its own way. They're never going to get signed to a major label, they will never be found on an *Emo Diaries* compilation and fortunately for them, even the most mature of us need some catharsis every now and then. This is extreme. RS

**The Convocation Of... "The Pyramid Technology" (Tiger Style)**- Have you ever listened to music while somewhat sleepy—possibly while inebriated as well—where the sounds coming from the stereo have such a droning beat, overly thick recording quality, and meandering melodic structure that not only does every single song sound pretty much exactly the same, but the masturbatory "jams" began to meld with the random noise filling your head at 3 AM on this dreary, sleepy, somewhat buzzed night? I have and the CD is by *The Convocation Of...* To be candid, I never saw the fuss with Moss Icon, the outfit in which Tonie Joy—TCO's primary masturbator—got his start. I thought there were a few bands that did Moss Icon better than Moss Icon did themselves (most notably, Corm from mid-'90s Washington DC). The Great Unraveling had an interesting song now and then, and Universal Order of Armageddon I always thought was overrated. As a matter of fact, I thought Tonie Joy's skill at forming bands that were big for about ten minutes before breaking up—and doing this again and again—was more impressive than the music. Let's put it this way, if I start doing Mescaline or Morphine or something I may dig this out again. For now, I'm tired enough as it is. RS

**Cub Country "High Uinta High" (Jade Tree)**- Thinking it a good idea to adhere to Aristotle's *Golden Mean*, Jade Tree took it upon themselves to counter their exceptional *Mighty Flashlight* release with this load of tripe. Cub Country is Jets to Brazil bassist Jeremy Chatelain's wish that he was Jay Farrar. All the elements of pastoral folk pop are present here in their most typical form; country beats

and basslines, simple open chords, slide guitar, blah, blah, blah. This is less an exercise in exploring country music than it is an exercise in following rules and recalling precedents. AP

**Curl up and Die "Unfortunately We're No Robots" (Revelation)**- Do you like old Cave-in (back when they played metal), Coalesce, Dillinger Escape Plan, Eighteen Visions, Drowningman, and Converge? Do you have all their CDs? Then you don't need this record. RS

**Damage "Final" (Deathwish)**- Deathwish would have you believe that

Damage is the most indispensable hardcore band that Philadelphia has to offer. I can't argue with that, mainly because it is a waste of my time to do so. It is important that you know that members of this band were or are in such other Philly outfits as American Nightmare, I Hate You, and the Boils. It is also important for you to understand that this album is covered with pictures of bleeding human skulls. If you can picture members of the three aforementioned bands being way into the idea of bleeding human skulls, then you can picture Damage. The CD is what some would call "punk-infused hardcore". It is what others would call "a Frisbee." AP

**Dashboard Confessional "So Impossible" (Vagrant) EP**- It's always been unfathomable to me why this Chris Carrabba kid is so popular. What's even more mind-boggling why Dan Horner, who commanded the guitars behind Sunny Day Real Estate's legendary album, *Diary*, volunteered to collaborate with him on this EP. What we have here are four more sappy acoustic offerings from Dashboard which are nothing special musically, and while undoubtedly heartfelt, read like the diary of a 14-year old emo kid. Hey, that's fine if you are indeed a 14-year old emo kid, but when you're a 27 year-old hipster, it's kind of creepy. The first three songs of this EP didn't present anything memorable at all and it's only the final track where Carrabba remotely lives up to the hype. In "Hands Down," instead of trying to write modern rock hits, he sticks to what worked in his previous bands, playing chunky punk rock riffs and crooning his romantic narratives over the bed of strings. Sure, it's pretty, but it certainly isn't anything that garners his two-page spread in *SPIN* declaring him "The Pied Piper of Emo" (as if that's a compliment, right?). I'm curious how many kids who will rush out to buy this EP are familiar with Horner's previous band and are aware that back in the day, "emo" could still be emotional without relying on cheesy metaphors and tired clichés. JB

**Dashboard Confessional "Summer Kiss" (Eulogy) EP**- I'm sorry, I just don't get it. I can see why people would like acoustic rock that is cheesy as fuck, I really can. I can totally understand how someone would think Chris' ballads about loneliness, loss, and love are earnest enough to be considered good music, but I just don't get why this band has gotten as big as it has. Furthermore, I have a hard time believing this is punk in any way, contrary to what a magazine article I just read claimed. I've never been a punk purist, c'mon look at LOI for God's sake, but what this record has in common with the Clash or the Ramones is beyond me. And, simply saying that this band is doing something different is not only false it is unfair to the denizens of other punk bands that have actually had to endure endless ridicule to make their music. MTV can keep this. RS

**The Dead Leaves Rising "Waking up on the Wrong Side of No One" (Plow City)** - If you're not depressed right now, the title of this band alone should give you a clue that you will be after you listening to this album. I think The Dead Leaves Rising sounds like Morrissey's solo stuff or a stripped-down version of Cursive, while my friend Bruce thinks it sounds like James Taylor (strangely, Bruce sees this as

sort of a good thing). Regardless, you get the idea – introspective singer/songwriter type stuff with lyrics about breaking up with girls and plenty of pretty acoustic instrumentation. Considering that the band is basically one person – and he's only twenty-two years old – this is a pretty impressive repertoire of original compositions. But compared to some of his elder cohorts, *Walking Up on the Wrong Side of No One* lacks the much needed the invention and energy to take it outside coffee house walls. JB

**Death Cab For Cutie "The Stability EP" (Barsuk) EP**- As most everyone reading this magazine already knows, Death Cab manage to evolve and improve with each release. And if this three-song EP is any indication of how their next full-length is going to sound, I think it's safe to add it to your "best of" list before it's even been recorded. *The Stability EP* is reminiscent of the slow plodding song structures exhibited on last year's EP, *The Photo Album*. It's taken a bit further though, and superfluous instrumentation like synthesizers and sequencers— which were more prevalent in their earlier works – are used more sparingly, giving an airy quality to these songs. However, just because they're slow doesn't mean that they're dull; in fact, quite the opposite is true. At this point in the review, I was originally planning on doing a quick song-by-song analysis, but honestly the songs flow together so cohesively that the entire EP – even their cover of Bjork's "All I Full of Love" – seems to flow together into one long piece. Speaking of lengthiness, the EP climaxes (or anti-climaxes) with its title track, which – though it is over twelve minutes long – isn't the least bit self-indulgent. The instrumentation swells and recedes under Ben Gibbard's lulling vocals accompanied by a drumbeat so laid-back it sounds like your turntable is playing at the wrong setting. At the song's predictable end, most of the instruments drop-out, save a simple piano and drum loop, as Gibbard re-mutters the verse in the background, his vocals eventually replaced by lilting chords played on a Juno, all so beautiful that you never want it to end. JB

**The Dedication "Youth Murder Anthems" (Deathwish) EP**- This Boston area band makes hardcore with lots of exciting twists, turns and time changes- and yet it's still linear enough to follow and enjoy. A very accurate sense of timing fuels this engine and keeps it rolling over nice crispy screamed vocals- this is the type of record where the sinewy playing almost obscures the immediate catchiness of their sound. An honest observation, I actually found myself subconsciously tapping the feet along to these 6 tracks. Jeez, doesn't that makes me sound like a old bastard. One of the best surprises from Boston since The Trouble. Get this! dup

**Denali (Jade Tree)**- I went to a show about six months ago at a small bar in Cleveland. I had no idea who they were, but if you've ever lived in Cleveland you'll understand that there's really nothing to do there so if there's any type of show, usually I'll go just to get out of the house for a little while. Anyway, after an opening act, some band called Denali (featuring members of Engine Down) hit the

stage and floored everyone in the club with their Portishead meets Kid A brand of indie rock. As soon as the vocalist stepped up to the mic, everyone's jaw dropped a few inches, but once she started to sing, our jaws fell off our faces. Maura Davis' voice is more serene than Portishead ever was – a siren supported by electronic beats and keyboards, supplemented by shimmering guitar playing that puts the music in a rock context instead of the typical laptop fanfare. On the way out the door, I bought their demo which said that they had an album coming out on Jade Tree; and I had a feeling I might never see them in a setting that small again. So before everyone else figures out how good they are, hunt down Denali at your local dive and prepared to be awed. I know I was. JB

**Desaparecidos "Read Music/Speak Spanish" (Saddle Creek)**- It's terrible really, the warmth and familiarity that a song can obtain that makes you just love it. No! It's crazy, I can't pinpoint it! Connor Oberst has been promising audiences at his Bright Eyes shows a return performance with more rock, and with Desaparecidos, Oberst delivers. Where Bright Eyes may have to grab an acquired tasting ear, this effort is more (to say the least) straight forward and consumable by most alternative station listeners. No matter what is backing it, you can't cover up Oberst's way of singing— his fragile and quivering voice that makes him sound like a child in the toy aisle somewhere in between crying and whining. At the end of the measure, it really doesn't matter which direction I point my finger whether it is towards Weezer-esque, Sebadoh-ish, a Pavement-ism or somewhere in-between. This is the kind of catchy, hooky pop that will snag your favorite sweater while you enjoy the guilty pleasure. CT

**Dianogah "Millions of Brazilians" (Southern)**- On *Millions of Brazilians*, this Chicago trio lays down ten smooth, refined instrumentals with an intentionally humble production, fashioning one of the more coherent and personal instrumental selections that we here at *Law of Inertia* have heard in quite some time. The recording on this album balances sure-footedly between two tendencies, one, the tendency to make the instruments (guitar, drums, bass) sound disconnected and independent of one another; and two, the tendency to collaborate the individual voices into whole dynamic compositions. The result is a sound that at once highlights both the character of each player and the comprehensive aesthetic of these players combined. A winner. AP

**The Dickies "All This And Puppet Stew" (Fat Wreck)**- "This album is dedicated to Joey Ramone." The boldest part of the liner notes quells the question, "should the Dickies be releasing a new record nowadays?" This band knows where it's been, but as this 6 years worth of studio work proves, no US period act came as close to the finely tuned sugar punk of the Buzzcocks as these guys. At this point, these guys are basically Stan Lee and Leonard Graves Phillips with

5

# 6

whoever backs them up. The token helium vocals (Jello Biafra fronts Devo?) sound as beautifully shrill as ever on these tightly laced-up pop executions

with little waste. The original fathers of the punk cover song don't disappoint here either; the Isley Brothers' "Nobody But Me", Blodwyn Pig's "See My Way" (ex-Jethro Tull outfit, also covered by the late Mr. Ramone), Marc Benno's 70's obscurity "Donut Man" (which is superb). Snatches of prog rock and even some baroque stylings show through here and there too. Fans of the '77 style of melodic "faster/louder" punk will not be disappointed in the least. **dup**

**Kevin Devine "Circle Gets The Square" (Immigrant Sun)**- If this is the new direction of music, please shoot me now. Anybody can pick up a guitar and write some songs. There was nothing wrong with people doing this before, that is, until Dashboard Confessional sold 60,000 records and started to sell out venues all over the U.S. Now these not so talented musicians are recording albums and labels are actually releasing them. Their label considers this "Incredible, heartfelt singer/songwriter material for fans of the acoustic Saves the Day Cd and Dashboard Confessional". You want heartfelt singer/ songwriter material, how about Elliot Smith, Pete Yorn, Bob Dylan, or about a million others. I hope really bad things happen to Kevin Devine, Immigrant Sun, and anyone that thought this was a good idea. **NT**

**The Detachment Kit "They Raging, Quiet Army" (Self Starter Foundation)-** There are few things sadder than a good band getting a badly mixed CD. The vocals protrude over the music so noticeably! This technical error doesn't hurt the band much because their musical prowess makes up for the lack in engineering skills. It is quite possible that the sassy, stop-and-start, indie punk band intentionally set the vocals a layer or three too high above the crunchy guitars and thin-sounding drums, but this decision didn't do them justice. In listening to this disc, you can almost tell that the band must put on a visually stimulating show, as the music requires some high-energy. Hell, mixing error aside, this is better than 75% of releases I've been through this month. Put this on your wish list! CT

**Division "Who Died/A Working Title" (Sinister)**- Hey! Bands that no one has heard of! Stop enhancing your CDs! Use that time to write better songs or to get rid of your terrible singers. This is pretty basic guitar-bass-drums rock band, albeit with very solid progressions. Each instrument assumes its place in what become exceptionally tight formations, supporting driving rhythms with polished precision, the bass doing an exemplary job of tying the melody of the guitar to the cadence of the drums. The first song is instrumental, which starts to seem like a really good idea after hearing the singer on track two. While the instrumental work is impressive, I can't help but advise that Division lose the cheesy vocals, the ultra-cheesy lyrics and the pretentious "song explanations". Do you really think it matters that you let everyone know how super-personal these songs are to you and your heart and your heart's feelings when you sing lines like "You mean so

much to me, you are my everything"? Yeah, like no one's ever thought of *that* before. Good original idea. **AP**

**Drowningman "Still Loves You" (Equal Vision) EP-** Here we have five machine-gun melodies from Vermont's finest. Off the heels of their *Revelation* debut full-length, this recording is a bit dated at this point, but we here at *LOI* think so highly of Drowningman that we couldn't leave this EP out. And, like all Drowningman stuff it's pissed-off, brooding, and filled to the brim with the kind of dissonant chaos that put this band on the hardcore map. Yet another must have from this band. It even shows that Simon can sing as well as scream like a banshee. In fact, his voice is so damn piercing when turned to the right volume it could tear the bark off trees. Recommended.

Duvall "Standing at the Door" (Double Zero) EP- Here we find physical evidence that you can be deathly ugly and still put out a mediocre pop album. Exhibit "A" is a band photo in which the bass-player and the drummer look as if they are both dying from malnutrition and sleep-deprivation simultaneously, and the guitar-player looks like a police officer. Exhibit "B" consists of four songs that I have heard played by up to a thousand other bands up to a million times, songs that are impossible to criticize because they are perfect: a handful of pretty chords, simple harmonies and melodies carried by a relatively generic (but agreeable) voice and lyrics about girls. What more could you want? It's just a pop band. The most special thing about them is that they're so ugly. AP

**Electric Frankenstein "Annie's Grave" (Victory)-** More of the same from this punkish NY rock act, the centerpiece of Victory's "hey look, this is what rock and roll used to be" marketing. But the band isn't as transparent as the packaging, these guys are serving up good old sneering garage punk like The Germs playing Iron Maiden's first album. I really wanted to say that they sound different since kool-ass hardcore vet Carl Porcaro (ex-Killing Time) joined the group on guitar, but you can't win 'em all. To his credit, the band sounds tighter and more menacing but this is so straight ahead it'll sober you up. Includes a cover of the Dead Boys' "Third Generation Nation". Good stuff, like most of their already large output. By the way, is every Victory release an enhanced CD? What a fuckin' pain. **dup**

**El Guapo "Super/System" (Dischord)** - This album probably took all of an hour to conceive, write and record. Each track is, at best, one drum beat that does not change, one synth part that does not change and some boring lyrics that usually do not change. When I saw that there were eighteen tracks on *Super/System*, I thought that these guys must have been pretty busy, but the truth is they could have done this over the weekend. If you enjoy a simple aesthetic with little-to-no substance, stay home and make it yourself. It would be cheaper and more fun. **AP**

**End It "Meet Your Maker" (Atarms Mechanics)-** Very thrash influenced metal stuff here that's well done, with harsh vocals and tough elastic guitar and bass playing. Good heavy stuff, this doesn't try to be hardcore by slowing down the tempo but at the same time

it's devoid of double-bass drumming and the rough vocals are distinguishable and effective. Reminds me of a simpler Deadguy, but easier to follow and not as over the top. Clear, rapid drumming bolsters this fierce unrelenting dense sound that sounds like a brawl in the studio. Includes an Entombed cover and a Testament song; this is good shit. **dup**

Engine Down "Demure" (Lovitt)- For all intents and purposes, *Demure* is a pop record. It's laden with catchy vocal parts and simple four-chord rock progressions, all plugged into relatively simple song structures. What sets this album apart is its mood. Every song is built around minor chords, creating a dark and gloomy, but by no means droning, listen. The rhythms, not only those of drums, but also of guitars, keep the songs vibrant, sometimes even rocking, but they never allude to happy times, especially not once topped-off with Keeley Davis' melancholy vocals. The individual songs on *Demure* gather intensity subtly as they progress, lending a real sense of motion to each in spite of the simple verse-chorus-verse structure. A simple, but well-thought-out and well-produced album. AP

**The Eyeliners "Sealed With A Kiss!" (Lookout! Records)** - Let me ask you some questions. Question #1: Have you ever had a person who has never been to a punk show and thinks Blink 182 or The Offspring is the epitome of punk rock, try to tell you what "the scene" is all about (MTV or other popular sources of teen culture count, too)? Question #2: Have you ever seen a girl wearing her pink, trendy mall-bought "PUNK" t-shirt, leaving you to casually tell yourself or a friend, "I bet she's never even heard of the Dead Kennedys...other than seeing their shirts on sale at Hot Topic, I mean"? This last question is more to the point. Question #3: Have you ever heard of The Donnas, or heard a bad Screeching Weasel song? If you answered, "Yes" to any or all of these questions, you already know exactly what The Eyeliners are like. Also worthy of being mentioned are the repetitive song structures that I've heard way too many times before and bland, abysmal, completely unoriginal lyrics. Here's one particularly horrendous example: "You were walking by, you were looking so sly with a cigarette, when you caught my eye, it was love at first sight, and I was hypnotized, but

out loud. Sounds pretty dumb, right? It makes me want to ask, "Did you make those up off the top of your head?" Because I seriously hope that's the case. In fact, I hope this is just a joke and they're just doing this to have fun, because if they are taking themselves seriously, then this makes the most mediocre bands in punk rock look that much better. Dear Eyeliners: I want the time I spent listening to this back. **TB**

**Face to Face "How to Ruin Everything" (Vagrant)**- It's not easy being Trevor Keith. I saw Face to Face in London a few weeks ago, and the crowd kept screaming for them to play their 1993 hit song "Disconnected," which isn't a bad thing... aside from the fact that they'd already played it and pretended to play it again- and they were only four songs into their set. Though the title of this album is probably supposed to be ironic, it's actually fairly accurate in summarizing Face to Face's career in the last five years. After two amazing albums - *Don't Turn Away* and *Big Choice* - in the early nineties, the band decided to get "experimental," setting off a lengthy strain of musical disasters. Well, here's

the good news: He hasn't lost it...completely. While Face to Face will never be as good as they were circa 1991, *How to Ruin Everything* proves that they're back on the right track. If I wanted to, I could cite specific examples: how the songs are actually catchy again, how the "woah-oooh" backing vocals are back in full-effect, and how their new drummer gives a much needed kickstart to single-guitar attack. I could also give complaints: How track six sounds too much like the Alkaline Trio, how half of the album is filler, and how hideous the layout is. I still probably wouldn't buy this album; but when the next one comes out I won't laugh and say, "these guys are still together?" – a reaction that has become habit. Instead, I'll actually be excited to open it up (if I get a copy for free, that is), pop it in my CD player, and see if Face to Face can fully recapture the magic they lost so long ago. JB

**Face to Face/Dropkick Murphys (Vagrant)**  
Face to Face has always been just okay. They continue that tradition on their half of this split in which they present one new single and two covers. Who cares? Pop-punk and melodic hardcore bands feel like there is some magic in taking a song that has personality and style and sterilizing it into their own generic and ubiquitous sound. Truly, there is no magic in that. Speaking of style, The Dropkick Murphys have it in spades, especially on their single, "The Dirty Glass." It's a whimsical number that features Kay Hanley from Letters to Cleo as one character in a rock-opera-esque ballad about women who are loose at parties. Unfortunately, neither their style nor their whimsy carry over into the covers that complete the Murphys half of the split. This is an average record, not really worth your money, but if you got it free like I did then you may as well be pleased. **AP**

**Faded Grey "A Quiet Time Of Desperation" (Indecision)-** On the side of the good Indecision releases (the 50/50 divider wall of quality), this is solid hardcore from the early 90's "last-gasp-of-fast" blueprint. But as the thankfully unconventional band name might denote, this band is on the next notch of the mature 'core sprocket. Clear vocals, no lack of energy and an affirmative stance are all present, but there's that certain grown-up sentiment here- I even checked all the photos for any signs of "X's on hands". A mild sense of melody gives root to the energy, honing but not dulling the sound. There's some excellent lyrics here (check "The Emo Solution") and the overall vibe reminds me of great mid-field players like 411, early Samiam and Statue. For those that like more 'direct' music instead of stomp / death/thug / thrash / etc., this is a definite keeper. **dup**

# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: RS | Jonah Bayer: JB | Jason Murphy: JM | du prosporio: dup | Adam Parks: AP |

Jonah Brucker-Cohen: JBC | Tyler Bussey: TB | Celeste Tabora: CT | Nick Twisp: NT

7

**Favez "From Lausanne, Switzerland"** (Doghouse) – The press sheet for this record reads, "Favez is a four member band from Lausanne, Switzerland, but you would never guess it." I don't know about Carmen Sandiego who wrote the press release, but the fact that the album is called "from Lausanne, Switzerland" was a pretty good clue for me. But I know what the publicist is trying to say – they don't sound like Millencolin. In this case, that is good. To be honest, I didn't listen to this entire album because I couldn't stop listening to the first track, "The Ages of Wonders." It's anthemic punk at its best: a balls-out intro with In Flames-esque guitar screeches and harmonies, a simple verse propelled by a perfectly syncopated drum beat which builds and builds in tension until it kicks into a chorus so well-phrased and energetic it should have come from Avail. The rest of the album is quite disparate but has a huge sound; Lausanne is the place where Elliot's experimental parts mingle with Sensefield balladry and Eventide melodicism. I imagine it looks somewhat like Louisville. JB

**Fearless Freep "And Fall is How You Sleep"** (Mag Wheel) – Albums come and go, but the good ones really make an impact. Sometimes it's not only the music or the artist that sticks in your mind, but instead it's the tune that you hum as you wait for the bus, walk to work, or daydream at home. Rob Stephens, the singer/songwriter behind Fearless Freep, plays music that stays relevant after you switch off the stereo. Even a few years after releasing his first record, Stephens has obviously spent more time crafting these tracks. He's not afraid to make space interesting and knows that rocking out needs balance. Songs like "It's all good" and "It's all so up" are stalwart additions to the lighter side of indie rock's finer moments. Even on "Didn't I", his obvious Rex impersonation, Stephens still manages to spill his emotional guts without getting too messy. It's hard calling an album "feel-good" because it has such a tortured stigma, but the Freep sure do make you want to smile and sing along. JBC

**Fields Of Fire "Keep It Alive"** (Phyte) – From the eminently likeable Phyte label comes this band who apparently formed as a side project to play 80's style hardcore. And to their benefit, this SoCal band is making great, spirited music in the style of their forefathers- especially if you're not sure which one is actually your father. Their style is one that bounces around multiple influences but still manages to mesh pretty well. From 7 Seconds to Agnostic Front, it's all been commingled and reassembled. The first

song, "Skatepunks", is sure to spark pangs in the chest of anyone who reached out to skating years before ESPN did. There's a certain something about their style that surpasses the "rehash" write-off that lots of such bands get tagged with. Perhaps it's their song "Present Tense", where they make clear that "each second that you spend reminiscing is a second that you may as well be dead". Maybe it's because they're forging their own style with an obvious knowledge of original hardcore AND a great ability to play well. Fields Of Fire may have done for positive hardcore what Youth Of Today did in 1986. dup

**Finch "Falling Into Place"** (Drive-Thru) EP – The worst band in the entire world is that band Keepsake. Their whole shtick is being a pop-punk band because that's in, and simultaneously being a "scream-o" band, because that is also in. The two genres don't mix, were never intended to mix, and when you put them together in one song, you get a song that is bad. Finch is better than Keepsake, but they still have the whole pretty-boy alterna-teen thing going, coupled with the weak tactic of screaming over their wussy songs instead of writing parts that actually rock. Other than that unacceptable practice, this EP sounds exactly like Reggie and the Full Effect without the "we are just kidding about this" aspect. AP

**Kyle Fischer "Open Ground"** (Polyvinyl Records) – I wouldn't recommend buying this album if you're looking for Fischer's previous band, Rainer Maria. You'll find the only songs that resemble R.M. are the two that Caithlin De Marrais sings, and that's solely due to her vocals. While it's been heard of that one releases a solo record with a cover song; Fischer's so-called solo contains a song that De Marrais wrote and sings. By the way, if you found her vocals unfitting in the past, you might say it seems her niche lies within these country-inspired songs. Fischer, however, whose album it actually is, leaves much to be desired. "The Noon Day Song" is the one I call tolerable. The track's layers and wall of sound are intriguing. Get past his striving vocal performances and simple lyrics, which he actually sounds like he means, (most evident in "Headphones") and you might find the instrumentation passable, however overdone in the alt-country genre. True, he could actually evolve and in turn surprise us with goodness with his next release, but this one... this one I'll leave for the fishes. CT

**Flogging Molly "Drunken Lullabies"** (Side One Dummy) – This Flogging Molly disc doesn't differ from their previous effort. If anything, it's a continuation of the same traditional Irish-neuovo-folk/rock story. The energy of the seven-piece band hasn't diminished, it can still make you look for the closest Guinness to drink out of while making up your own jig. "Drunken Lullabies" is anything but a compilation of songs to put you to sleep. On the contrary, it's great wide-awake party music. "May The Living Be Dead (In Our Wake)" is one of many Flogging Molly tunes that by its vigorous flow, you would never guess it was quite a morbid and self-piteous tune. "If I Ever Leave This World Alive" is about as tender and slow as this band can be. They probably consider this their ballad. Overall, I take the disc with a grain of salt. It's

fun to listen to, kind of a fad— unless you can take Irish rock in large doses, I'd be wary of a purchase. CT

**F-Minus "Suburban Blight"** (Hellcat) – New one from this aggressive 2 guys, 2 girls basic hardcore outfit. By basic, I mean early 80's style core at thrash speed and with nil on the embellishments. Good if fast is what you cook up and shoot into your arm, but this high never lasts that long. Everyone knows this shit has been cut dozens of times. And no one I know really trusts dope from this hook up. Me, I prefer the methadone these days. dup

**Lou Ford "Alan Freed's Radio"** (Cargo) – You know, I once had a great dislike of country music. And while I still can't turn on the Top 40 country stations (shudder), how can I turn my back on great music by Johnny Cash? I also have a soft spot for the alt-country genre, of which purportedly belongs to (according to the press release). I guess that means the twang of the guitar and the lyrical content come from the country side, while the there is a decent rock influence (sometimes it even gets loud) and the whole thing bounces along in an alternative way. Do I like it? It's not too shabby. The singer has a great voice for this type of music, and the lyrics are not that ridiculous. The music is also nice, with some full-out rockers next to some country ditties and even a ballad or two. This one might not sit next to Wilco in the pantheon of alt-country, but then again, what does? This is a fine record, well worth your time and effort to track down. JM

**Forty Winks "To the Lonely Hearts" (End)** – If there is one thing that I learned from watching that gut-wrenching pro-America propaganda that CBS passed off as a documentary, it's that Italians are better people than Americans. They are more passionate, more compassionate and they have that "right place at the right time" thing going for them. However, as I may have become a bit jaded about melodic punk music in the past few years, when I hear Italians singing pretty punk songs about their girlfriends, I still think they are full of shit. So while this band is Italian, they are also covering a topic and a sound that is about as derivative as one can find in this day and age. Plus, the lyrics seem like they were written in Italian and then translated directly to English and then occasionally "enhanced" with words from the singer's "Learn a New English Word Every Day" calendar. This might make them seem smart to Italian girls, but it's not doing anything for me. One thing that is amazing about this band is that the singer seemingly has no mouth, so he is forced to sing through his nose. AP

**Fugazi "The Argument"** (Dischord) – What is there left to say about punk's most urgent, forthright, and introspective musical outfit? This band never ceases to completely shed its skin from one album for a brighter and shinier skin on the next; just as it never ceases to amaze. Perhaps there is far more to say for Washington DC's prodigal sons after all as they've been remained the most vital and passionate force in independent rock for the past 11 years and show no signs

of losing the edge. This chapter, their sixth full-length album if memory serves (and if my record collection reflects the truth—I have everything they've ever put to tape), is the brightest star I've seen from the band since *In on the Kill Taker*. Henry Rollins told me in an interview last issue that this record was sure to be the best musical work of the year by a long shot and my God was he right. Taking a darker, moodier approach than I've ever noticed in the past, *The Argument* shows that the members of Fugazi are not only still pissed off, but they haven't lost their technical accuracy (maybe even gained some) or the sheer creative genius that made them famous so long ago. I guess the people that don't have this by now are those that either never got what Fugazi was about or those that think they're over the hill. Let me tell you people this: this is the best record I've received in the last two years. If you respect my taste is music and appreciate what I have tried to put into *Law of Inertia*'s musical selection each issue then you should do yourself a favor to buy this record for the simple reason that nearly every single band ever covered in LOI has been influenced by Fugazi whether they realize it or not. Now it's your turn. RS

**Fugazi "Furniture"** (Dischord) EP – I don't like reviewing Fugazi records because everyone gives them good reviews. How boring. For once, I'd like to hear someone talk about how they think Fugazi are overrated, have overstayed their welcome, or are irrelevant they are in today's varied punk landscape. However, I'm not going to be that guy. The first song on *Furniture* is a tad reminiscent of "Waiting Room," and if memory serves, I think I heard a different version of this song on a prior release. Wait... forget it. To be honest, his record is along the same lines of their excellent full-length, *The Argument*, and Ross is much more articulate when it comes to all things MacKaye than me; so if you need to know exactly what this sounds like read the review above. Or don't, since you'll probably buy this anyway. JB

**The Gamits "A Small Price to Pay"** (Suburban Home) – A few weeks ago my boss walked into the office and asked if this record playing on the stereo was an old Green Day disc he hadn't heard before. Before telling him it was in fact Denver's second finest pop-punk band I asked him why he had said that. He replied that the faux-British sneer of the vocals, the head-bobbing power chords, and the woh-ohs reminded him of the Bay Area scene circa 1993. So, there you have a pretty good description of the Gamits: a catchy, fun, band that sounds like *Dookie* era Green Day. And if you're like me then you love that record and find many things to adore about the Gamits. It should be noted that this band makes a substantial effort in interviews to insist that they are more than a pop-punk band which is really silly since they are clearly just that. However, if you like the stuff that Lookout! put out about ten years ago (with a modern twist) and you think that Green Day may have run out of ideas then by all means pick this up! RS

**Garrison "Be A Criminal" (Revolution)-** Here we have a band that isn't afraid to make somewhat off-kilter sounds in order to excite the listener (was that whistling? I think it was!), and yet, can still write songs which are catchy enough to be taken seriously without sacrificing an ounce of integrity or watering themselves down. Reminds me of The Pixies, in a sense. The atmosphere created here is clearly intended to be dark and dreary, both in lyrical content and in their musical approach, while the glorification of both illegal and immoral activities is a reoccurring theme. Definitely an entertaining concept. The energy and inventiveness in tracks like "Recognize An Opportunity", my favorite song on the album, gets addictive fast, and lines like "I could point a finger but I'd rather point a gun", not to mention song titles like "Dump The Body", almost come across as too convincing. Throw in some stellar production, courtesy of J. Robbins of Jawbox, and you've got a very good record. For me, this is quite an incredible introduction, and all I can say is if their next record is only half as interesting and smart as this one, it'll still be worthwhile. Fucking awesome. TB

**The Glands (Capricorn)-** With sweet harmonies atop pop-formula structure, I couldn't resist bopping my tired head to this little-bit-country, little-bit-rock-n-roll effort. Though it's typically predictable, it's so well performed and produced, I'm forced to let go of my sometimes undeniable pretenses about this genre. I foresee many traditional pop fans clutching this disc dear to their hearts. Particularly enjoyable "Swim" has up-tempo piano touches, I'm slanting towards saying they're slightly more Beatles influenced than the next band. Their ballads show a more moody side, however it seems to interrupt the innocence that encompasses the majority of the album. The Glands would make a great opener for Cheap Trick, being as many of the melodies are familiar to that of the aforementioned. Since the album is never too outlandish and is largely comparable to many past bands, I could see many generations enjoying this disc that's perfect for a Sunday afternoon family reunion picnic. CT

**The Glassjaw "Worship and Tribute" (Warner Bros.)-** I saw the Glassjaw play at the Wreck-age Records festival a bunch of years ago here in NYC. They played first, when most people hadn't even showed up yet to see Sons of Abraham, Indecision, or Silent Majority (Sons and SM shared members with this band). At that point, Beck, the band's guitarist played drums, and even on an unfamiliar instrument he smoked. Even when I saw the band then I knew they were something very special. No one other than the kids in the other bands that played that night seemed to know much about them but everyone I talked to in those bands loved Glassjaw. I still have their demo CD, which is amazing in its ownright- a lo-fi piece of teenage aggression. Regardless, this whole CD is made worth the cost of the plastic it was burned onto for just one snippet of just one thirty-second piece of the ninth song, "Cavalcade." In the middle of the song, Darryl Palumbo, the band's virtuosic

vocalist, assumes the voice of a sports television announcer and details a race which takes place between his heart, soul, and mind. As best I can tell his heart wins. This section may be quintessential Palumbo as it displays the breathtaking control he maintains over his voice while showing the desperation which he tells his stories and the acute creativity he holds looming above any other vocalist in hard rock today. Honestly, this disc isn't as textured as their last record for Roadrunner, which managed to conjure power out of lush and beautiful power chords (before they came crashing into fist-in-the-face choruses). This record tends to be less subtle and far more visceral. The end result isn't bad at all and I would surely throw \$15 down to hear Darryl sing any day of the fucking week. Thankfully, Darryl has gotten over his mistrust of women as well and he's moved onto other subjects (of which I know not since Time Warner chose not to furnish me with a lyric sheet). And, even though Glassjaw is best when they are dynamic- in other words when they alternate between heavy and soft, rather than one or the other- the best songs on this record are the subdued ones, purely because they let Darryl go fucking nuts. Good no matter what, I think. RS

**The Glass Slipper Tragedy "The Lipstick is Wearing Thin" (Fate of Icarus)-** Hailing from the beautiful but unlikely Jackson Hole, Wyoming, this young five-piece has taken it upon themselves to bleed your ears with some of the most punishing hardcore to come out of the West. Their eight-song debut is characterized by dark, driving chord progressions, lurching breakdowns and the frantic screams of singer Drew Mack. Though GST employs their fair share of mathematical know-how, they also don't hesitate to rock you with a simple mid-tempo 4/4 part, or to break everything down with a little bass and drum fling. The result is a pretty diverse and dynamic sound, encompassed by the kind of omnipresent passion and energy that hardcore fanatics wet themselves over. If you were looking for a soundtrack to set someone on fire to, let this be it. AP

**The Gloria Record "Start Here" (Arena Rock)-** This album is really a triumph for The Gloria Record. I was anything but impressed with their first two releases, but with *Start Here* they overcome many of their former hang-ups, offering an album packed with well-developed songs and a renewed inspiration. My criticism of The Gloria Record has always been that they have tried to stretch too little too far. Typically, their songs have been rooted in melody, with layered guitars providing a platform over which singer Chris Simpson dragged a line or two of lyrics that never seemed to complete an idea. On this album, melody is still paramount, but the diversity of sounds produced by guitar, synthesizer and keyboard and the greater emphasis on rhythm gives *Start Here* a richness and depth that are new achievements for the Austin quintet. Whereas on the past two records vocals have seemed an afterthought, Simpson's expanded musical vocabulary allows his voice to become an integral and structural element of each song. To top it off, Simpson has traded in his characteristic feigned melodrama for some sincere emotion. Be it a new ability or a new willingness, the propensity to enrich each song has allowed The Gloria Record to write pieces that develop from start to finish, that fill themselves with

energy and beauty as they progress. No one is going to contest the fact that The Gloria Record have been listening to their fair share of *OK Computer*, but at the same time it would be entirely inappropriate to claim that these boys didn't use that influence to arrive at their own fresh and new sound. It is good to see that at least one of the more mature indie bands is not afraid to keep on growing. AP

**The Goblins "Missing Fits" (My Pal God)-** This record demonstrates just how simple and easy to duplicate their two-minute long punk masterpieces really were. According to the liner notes, the Goblins found an abandoned Misfits coffin in the basement of Touch and Go's office in Chicago, and inside was the sheet music to never before recorded Misfits songs. The Goblins pull the songs off flawlessly, using the same three power chords, low-fi production and "1,2,3,4" as the original ghouls. However, song titles that play on the originals like, "Necklace of Brains," "4 Food Groups," and my personal favorite, "Who Killed Agnes Moorehead?" can't be listened to without a smirk... which is the point. The Misfits were a great band, one who wrote some of my favorite punk songs of all-time (note to Jerry Only - PLEASE MAKE THE REUNIONS STOP!) but let's face it, their lyrics were never meant to be taken seriously. The Goblins meticulous attention to detail makes this album entertaining for hardcore Misfits fans and nostalgia seekers alike, if you can get over the gimmick-factor. The downside is that like their predecessors, the Goblins like to keep it short, so be warned - these eleven songs clock in at just over thirteen minutes. If it's possible to make Glenn Danzig smile, this should do it. JB

**The Good Life "Black Out" (Saddle Creek)-** It's going to be difficult not to gush about this. And it's going to be impossible not to bring Cursive up, so let me go ahead and do that now. Tim Kasher is a genius. Since first hearing Cursive however many years ago, I have been captivated by his lyrics, his solid and holistic songwriting and his ability to compose albums thematically and with such musical and syntactical precision. The past three Cursive albums have been so self-aware, so insightful, that one can't help but marvel at how easily Kasher makes his music and words know of themselves. With The Good Life, he joins Ryan Fox, Landon Hedges, Jihah Lee and Roger Lewis to explore a plusher more straightforward sound that at its peaks carries easily as much intensity and emotion as Cursive ever has. This second Good Life release is an incredible example of what Kasher and crew are capable, a nearly perfected edition of over-organized misery composed of tension-bearing song pairs ("O'Rourke's" and "After O'Rourke's," "The Beaten Path" and "Off the Beaten Path") that are bookended by complimentary title tracks. *Black Out* is refreshingly processional, the songs not blending, but feeding into one another, resulting in a story that will leave you as exhausted as the isolated and drunken main character. It will also leave you needing to hear the story again and again. While the album in its entirety is amazing, the individual songs are almost masterpieces. A consistent sound throughout, the music is exalted by brilliant chord progressions, intelligent and vibrant electronic sequencing, Roger Lewis' standout drumming and Kasher's tired but always earnest vocals. Though both the concept and the music of *Black Out* are admirable, perhaps the most refreshing thing

about this album is its honesty. These songs come from Tim Kasher's veins. There is not an insight, accusation, admission or plea on this record that doesn't resonate with truth and need. By all means check out this CD. If you are lucky enough to have The Good Life swing through your town, check that out too. And check out Timmy K. Not only is he a genius, but he's totally hot. I would do him so right. AP

**Good Riddance/Kill Your Idol (Jade Tree)-** This split gives you a chance to forget that Good Riddance is on Fat Wreck. They wait until track three to sing about girls, using the first two tracks to delve into such profound political issues as the fact that democracy doesn't work, and the fact that most punk bands today don't sing about politics anymore, they sing about girls. Musically, Good Riddance delivers an unyielding punk/hardcore set that is pretty characteristic of SoCal and of Fat Wreck Chords. NYC's Kill Your Idols rocks out three tracks, a little faster, a little more abrasive than their Cali counterparts, but a complimentary sound. The meeting of the two coasts on this Jade Tree split makes for a pretty solid record and gives rock fans a reason to keep an eye out for future installations of Jade Tree's split single series. AP

**Hella "Hold Your Horse is" (5rc)-** There was a tiny red sticker on this record that touted the highly unlikely claim, "WARNING, Hella is not for everyone. This album will change the way you view music forever, so listen carefully." Well, believe it or not, it's true - for me at least. Every piece of press I've read about this guitar/drum duo compares them to some band named Lightning Bolt, who I've never heard of; but to me, Hella sounds like a disparate cross between Spazz, Primus, and John Zorn's *Naked City*." The greatest thing about the guitar work on "Hold Your Horse is" is the lack of distortion. Hella is more precise than almost any grindcore band I've ever heard, and guitarist Spencer Seim's surf-style staccato runs up and down the length of the fretboard aren't only pulled off with super-human ability, they also aren't muddled behind a wall of indecipherable buzzing. However, the real highlight of Hella are the skins. Now I'm not a drummer, but I think even if I were, I still wouldn't have a clue what this Zach Hill guy is doing. Not only are his rapid-fire beats so fast that it's hard to decipher the individual hits, but his sense of time is completely warped: the rhythms seem to pull away and work against from the natural of rhythm of the song like a toddler who just discovered the percussive nature of pots and pans. Yet, somehow, his schizophrenic syncopation works perfectly with the guitar. As you've probably gathered, Hella's music is difficult to describe. So do yourself

# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: RS | Jonah Bayer: JB | Jason Murphy: JM | du proserpio: dup | Adam Parks: AP |

Jonah Brucker-Cohen: JBC | Tyler Bussey: TB | Celeste Tabora: CT | Nick Twisp: NT

a favor and just go out and buy the record. Even if it doesn't change the way you listen to music forever, chances are it'll be unlike anything you've ever heard before. JB

## Hellacopters "High Visibility" (Gearhead)

The seventies retro thing is so played. I mean I like Moods for Moderns and Lovelight Shine as much as the next guy, but, as I've said before, there is something unauthentic about guys who used to be in emo bands a few years back running around in denim jackets and flared jeans. The Hellacopters are not only 100% authentic, but they're actually *better* than most seventies rock bands. Imagine Thin Lizzy's greatest moments combined with any band off the *Dazed and Confused* soundtrack. Think Alice Cooper in his prime. Think fucking Radar Love. The Hellacopters have nailed every subtlety of the music – from the guitar tone, to the pentatonic riffing, even the Steppenwolf-esque vocal phrasing. My only complaint with is that in all their live photos they're wearing giant angel's wings on their backs. I'll admit, aesthetically they're nice, but this band is so damn good that they can afford to eschew gimmicks and let their hot-rodded music speak for itself. JB

**Hey Mercedes "Every Night Fireworks" (Vagrant)**– It's easy for the members of bands like Jets to Brazil or Burning Airlines to say "don't judge us by our work with previous bands, judge us by our current work." In those cases, almost all members did not play in the same band previously, so to employ the translation: "our best stuff is behind us, so now please judge us by this not-as-great stuff" isn't necessarily fair. In Hey Mercedes' case the above isn't as easily said since 3/4 of the band made up 2/3 of the late, great Braid. Simply put, I would have killed for this kind of emotional "fireworks" around three or four years ago. Now, the guitars sound as clean and thick as ever, Bob's voice sounds unnaturally steady, the melodies and harmonies are clever, but I can't help compare this to the incomparable

*Frame and Canvas* record that Braid made a few years back. This record, while very good—a pinnacle for some—just doesn't seem to have the urgency, magnetism, and raw abandon as these guys' earlier stuff. Admittedly this is a much more focused and ambitious work than Braid ever pulled off, but that doesn't mean I have to like it better. RS

**The Hives "Main Offender" (Big Wheel Recreation) CD Single**– This CD single has a sticker on the front with a quote from Creation Records' founder, Alan McGee, "The greatest garage punk (or whatever

you want to call it) band on the planet." That is pretty bold. You know what though? This single is really, really great. The first song is taken from their most recent album on Epitaph and it is a pure rocker. The other two songs are really good, but not quite as good as the title track. They recently toured with the (International) Noise Conspiracy and I am wishing that I went to see them. The single is so good, I bought the album and the album is great, too. If you are a fan of INC, Scared of Chaka, B Movie Rats, or the Hellacopters, you should check this out. I hear that some major label just offered Epitaph a large sum of money for the rights to their next album. With the right push, these guys could take over the world! This wonderful band is from Sweden, the country that brought you Turbonegro, Refused, Abba, and International Noise Conspiracy. Do I need to say any more? NT

**Homesick For Space (Immigrant Sun)**– This is very promising. While most emo is simply going to shit, Homesick For Space's debut EP showcases a sound that isn't overly sappy or cliché. Think Elliott's *False Cathedrals* (though not as downright incredible), but more reliant on the use of piano and with an absence of heavy, distorted guitars, with traces of jazz included in the mixture. With a melancholy mood and soothing, lush melodies coupled with centralized, faint vocals, the band has constructed a very clean, relaxing sound—so relaxing, in fact, that listening to this at 3:30 pm made me sleepy enough to wake up five hours later on the couch, wondering, "What the hell just happened?!" It's fantastic; I just hope that listening to it doesn't make me pass out every time. TB

**The Hope Conspiracy "File 03" (Bridge Nine) EP**– I think that The Hope Conspiracy is one of the last credible hardcore bands left. They employ enough traditional elements for them to be considered "true" to their genre, but have leaned away from typical hardcore tempos and riffs enough to toe the margins of a newer sound. At its best, their rock-tinged hardcore is akin, yet superior, to the best Boy Sets Fire you can remember. *File 03* only contains one new original track, a Naked Raygun cover, and four previously unreleased tunes, a bit of history. The new track, "No Love Goes Unpunished," flaunts an old-school energy with a frantic urgency that is hip and "now," though looking back at the unreleased stuff (from 11/99) it is clear that The Hope Conspiracy did a dangerous little dance with the heart-angels-blood-eyes imagery that has been, and continues to be, bludgeoned to death by similar bands. I hope that this band stays on the good foot and continues to rock sincerely toward an even newer, fresher sound. If they do, the kids who like the hardcore music will be in for a real treat. AP

**Hot Hot Heat (Ohev)**– When you think about it, Hot Hot Heat is a pretty silly name for a band. Like "cold cold snow", you know snow is cold, actually you know snow is really cold. So you see what I'm getting at. Nonetheless, these new rock bands love to have words like "heat" and "rock" in their band names. In other words: "just in case you didn't get the fact that we rock or that we're hot, just look at our name and instant gratification comes your way!" Regardless, I'm sure the Hot Hot Heat's drummer flails wildly as he plays, I'm sure their keyboardist wears cool Buddy Holly glasses, I'm sure their bassist

sports mod-parkas with fur linings when the weather is "cold cold chill" out. To be honest, Hot Hot Heat aren't too bad. They just got signed to Sub Pop so apparently someone likes them. Do I think they're doing anything totally original? Not really. I think I've seen half a dozen bands like this in the past month or so. Would they probably be really good if they played live? I'm positive they would be. If you like your rock without much melody or cohesion check this out. If you like your rock typical, go pick up the new Strokes record. You'll probably like it better. RS

**Hot Rod Circuit "Sorry About Tomorrow" (Vagrant Records)**– Wow...when it comes to guilty pleasures, this band is my biggest and, by far, my favorite. Maybe I'm just biased due to the fact that they're one of few Connecticut (my home state) bands to get as far as they have, and for that, I respect them. (And yes, I know they're not exactly "a Connecticut band" but don't burst my bubble, jerk.) More importantly, I think this album stands on its own, musically, regardless of any irrelevant, outside factors such as where the band is located. Though constantly thrown into the same crap heap known as the category of "emo", all of Hot Rod Circuit's albums and their live shows are proof positive that they transcend the genre. Simply put, they manage to accomplish feats most emo bands cannot: they rock, they have fun while doing it, and they write good songs to boot. With that said, there's at least one throwaway on this one – previously, I had thought of "The Pharmacist" as a weak song, but it's grown on me gradually. Still, it's far from my favorite track. My favorites are "At Nature's Mercy", "Knees", and "Radiation Suit", but there's at least something good about every song on this record. "The Night They Blew Up The Moon", the one throwaway and the song I always skip, gets on my nerves, though, for some reason. One thing's for sure, the part about "taking the next ship into outer space" doesn't do much for me. From a lyrical standpoint, I can relate to "Cool For One Night", especially the line, "And I don't think that I can ever remember a time that this place felt quite like home." Aside from that, it's the usual sing-along type stuff that this band tends to do very well—not that that's a bad thing. To modify a line from the song "At Nature's Mercy", it's hard not to get hooked on Hot Rod Circuit...I'm real glad that I picked this up. TB

**Ides of Space "There are No New Clouds" (Better Looking)**– It's funny how certain bands that should have been burned into pop music's collective memory are forgotten while others that hardly stood alone way back when are all the rage years later. A good example of the latter is the work of Toni Joy, which I always to be chaotic and ill conceived. But the kids seem to love his work so what do I know. Some good examples of the former are Swervedriver, Hum, and the Drop 19s, all of whom are clear and present influences on Sydneys, Australia's Ides of Space. Musically, the Ides of Space deliver 10 lush, graceful tunes that do as much to call upon the Creation Records bands of the late '80s as they do to bite the digital-delay space-melancholy of Boston indie rock bands in the early '90s. Let's be honest here, Ides of Space are doing

nothing new. Their sound is completely derivative. However, will this find its way back into my stereo for some time to come. Most definitely. Recommended. RS

9

**Imperial Teen "On" (Merge)**– Happy and frantic, danceable pop is what you'll get with San Francisco native Imperial Teen's new album. In the same way Possum Dixon (RIP) got our booties shakin' Imperial Teen makes it permissible to shake that body anywhere you damn well please. With pop pros Anna Waronker (that dog.) and hubby Steve McDonald (Red Kross) behind the reins, you'll experience a world of vivid melodies, thought-out sonic assault, and upbeat satisfaction! If pop in 4/4 time, fake brit accents, and female backing vocals atop touches of synthesizers with a summer-type happy feel isn't your bag, don't even think about shopping here. CT

**In Control "Another Year" (Indecision)**– Ok, there's something to remember when you listen to this disc- California's In Control is from Oxnard. Oxnard, home of "Nardcore," has been a skateboard and hardcore hotbed from the word "go" (or since the late 70's). Therefore, there is no way that a band from Oxnard can sound like a "modern hardcore" band- slow and dark growling metal. The local roots of posh hardcore are far too deep. So, In Control plays fast, anemic So-Cal hardcore with obvious early local 'core influences (Aggression, Uniform Choice) as well as the heavier late 80's Cali styles (Hard Stance, Bl'ast). The result is powerful enough to shed immediate comparisons, although some might consider a touch of Youth of Today instrumentally evident. But YOT released their first recordings on Uniform Choice's label and the influence of UC upon that band is unmistakable. The thick basslines make these passionate tunes easy to grasp onto and lend a great sense of melody to hard and fast tunes. It's an old technique in hardcore but it finds itself in good practice here. There's even a hidden track about Oxnard itself, how could you go wrong? A memorable record of some great inspired hardcore. dup

**In Dying Days "Life as a Balancing Act" (One Day Savior)**– I remember when I first heard Grade and was like, "Whoa, this is some pretty hot stuff!" Or maybe I said "Woo-Ha! This is some pretty hot stuff!" You can't expect me to remember something like that. Irrespective, all of Grade's stuff was hot until they signed to Victory and decided they were a shitty pop band. It only got worse when they tried to redeem themselves by making a shitty metal album, 2001's embarrassing "Headfirst Straight to Hell". This new In Dying Days CD is a bit too reminiscent of Grade's last sorry attempt, albeit without the lame pop parts and with lyrics that are poetry compared to Grade's recent blathering. Weak song structure, cheesy 80s metal riffs and amateurish recording are the album's weakest points. A seeming sincerity and heartfelt lyrics are strong points, but aren't quite enough to make this record a winner. AP

# Or

**The (International) Noise Conspiracy "A New Morning" (Epitaph)-** The more astute readers of LOI will note that I did an interview with this band in our last issue. If you read that piece you might have noticed that the band's singer, Dennis, was awfully vocal on the subject of how an anarcho-socialist band fits into the consumerist music industry. Specifically, he spoke of how his band has reconciled their love of their chosen medium (music), their politics (very left), and capitalism (the music industry). I bought it and was admittedly impressed: here was a guy who had clearly done some thinking about his band and wasn't merely trying to ride the new rock and roll revival taking place these days to sell a few records. Rather, they would let their music do the speaking for them, come hell or Best Buy's poor sales statements! Then I saw a spread in *Alternative Press*, a magazine known for putting such highly radical musical acts as Sugar Ray, Limp Bizkit, and Sum 41 on their covers. The issue I saw featured the members of the INC modeling clothes for the magazine. There was no explanation of Marxism and its connection to punk rock, nothing. Just a small interview that did little to mask how the previous pages had trivialized their anarcho stance. How this band can justify such a clearly capitalist promotional move is beyond me. Congrats guys and girl of the The (International) Noise Conspiracy, you have made a mockery of the anarcho-socialist cause by helping hawk a few cheezy pants-suits made by slave labor in Malaysia in one fell swoop. Until I get a good answer from the band about how they can still maintain any sense of credibility and do fashion spreads, I am writing off this band and their new record—which is pretty good musically, at least much better than *Survival Sickness*. That's just low. RS

**J Church "Meaty, Beaty, Shitty Sounding Singles... 96 to '00" (Honey Bear Records)-** On the Honey Bear website, in the description of this disc, Lance says, "People always say that we're really just a singles band. So, here you go." Anyways, this is the first record I've ever owned that these guys put out, and it gets a little repetitive, as the songs don't vary much in style (with some exceptions, like the lo-fi acoustic ditty, "Earthquake Song") and the verses are usually similar (lyrics are attempts at being poetic/trying to say something about life), until the chorus kicks in, but it's fun to listen to. Almost half of the album is made up of covers (5 ELO songs, 1 Jesus and Mary Chain song, "You're The One That I Want" from *Grease*, a Bitch Magnet tune, etc.), which helps diversify the album a little bit. Based on other songs I've heard from J Church, and seeing them live last year, I'm sure that these guys have records out that put this one to shame. Even so, this is worth your time and money, especially if you already dig this band. You probably won't be disappointed, but I'd still say that this is for completists more than anyone else. TB

**Jerk Magnet "Seven Minutes in Heaven" (Ides of March)-** By some complete stroke of luck on the part of this PA band, their CD has remained in my stereo without leaving it for the past month. I am sure that the poor

attempt to re-create Blink 182 or A New Found Glory—complete with lyrics like "and all those times you make me feel like giving up, you come to me I'm not your problem solver in a cup..."—would not only benefit from a better singer, the sudden loss of their back-up singers ability to speak, and a more original sound, but would be better off realizing that without a healthy dose of pornography and Rachel Leigh Cook, this type of stuff, well, sucks. RS

**Joshua "Singing to your Subconscious" (Immigrant Sun)-** Is it arrogant for a reviewer like myself, knowing full well that readers and labels desire my comments on a certain record, to argue that a certain musical outfit should hang up their guitars and stop making music? Yes, it probably is. And, as Immigrant Sun are advertisers, and we'd never want to alienate our precious advertisers, I doubt they would appreciate me calling for an outright ban on new music from upstate NY's Joshua. I will say that when I write scathing reviews of records I get in the mail I often leave a smidgen of room for those that have worse taste than myself to find a nook of affection for a certain piece of music. I mean, I am fully aware that not everyone feels the same way I do about the Locust of the White Stripes, and I try to acknowledge that sentiment in reviews I write for other records. Nonetheless, I have no idea who would throw on this disc of absolutely the most uninspired bar-room melancholia I've heard in years. There's probably someone out there who is so thankful that Joshua have gotten over the drastic mix problems that plagued their releases from years ago—back when people were (sort of) interested in this band—thus they are picking this record up as a nod of sympathy for the band. Let me end with this sentiment: I have no idea why this disc isn't on Doghouse like their last record. But, I'll bet dollars to doorknobs that the kids just didn't dig Joshua three years ago and I'm pretty sure they're going to win even less fans with this product. Sorry guys. RS

**The June Spirit "Treat Me Like Someone Else" (Negative Progression) EP-** Well...I like the "we aim to please" approach, meaning there's at least some stylistic variation here, from emo, to punk, to (somewhat wimpy) emo-core, and back again. It's too bad The June Spirit aren't very good at any of those styles. My biggest bone of contention is the awful lyrics, which meet the emo stereotype— "let me into your heart," blah blah blah. It's like they're not even trying. The vocals of singer Ian Musgrave aren't awful; nothing spectacular, though. His voice on "Subject To Change" is particularly emotive and has enough good vocal melodies to keep my attention, but this is the exception to the general rule here. I'm pretty indifferent about this band, with the typical and predictable lyrics over the lackluster music they've written not being a very good combination. Hopefully, they won't get any worse, and I get the feeling that these guys are capable of doing better. I'll be making a note of checking out their next record to see for myself. (Note: This EP has been referred to as "worst CD of the year" numerous times; I'm being quite generous here, believe it or not.) TB

**Jupiter "It's Planetary" (Crank!)** EP- Dear Mr. Göran Persson. My name is Ross Siegel and as you can tell by my Americanized Jewish last name I am not Swedish and therefore you

really have no reason to listen to me since, after all, you are the Prime Minister of Sweden. I have a question for you regarding music. I am not sure what style of music you patronize when alone in your oval office—or whatever it is you have—but I represent a punk magazine in America called Law of Inertia. We like to think that for a bunch of Jewish white-kids we have enough soul to fill a few fried chicken joints. And that is why we're writing you. I'm sorry but I think the alternative musicians in your fair nation lack soul. Some people think bands like the Hives and The (International) Noise Conspiracy rock in a 1960s, Rolling Stones way, and those people have a good argument. But, when it comes down to it, having been to Memphis and New Orleans myself, I can't deny that those bands suffer from acute cases of white-boy syndrome. However, unlike bands such as Fireside and Jupiter, both on the Crank! record label in Santa Monica, CA, the former bands don't sing in awkward, Scandinavian English which sounds about as hip and sexy as warm beer. I am concerned for the safety of the new alternative bands coming from your nation, especially one called Jupiter. I think you should see to it that the first song on their new EP is banned in Stockholm, that they be forced to sing in Swedish to save face (for themselves and the sovereign land of Sweden), and the entire Swedish people promise to only bring American music worthy of an overseas audience. You see, Mr. Persson, if I want boring/awkward emo-pop like this, I can find buckets full right here in America on a label called Deep Elm. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Ross Siegel. RS

**K. "New Prolems" (TigerStyle)-** Good songwriting is a dying art. Today it seems very rare that a band will both sound good and actually write convincing songs. The best approach is to strip your music bare of any unnecessary noise and get back to the basics. Karla Schickele of K. (ex-Ida/Retsin) knows this formula well and *New Problems* is no exception. It's nice to actually hear some real emotion in a song and not glazed over attempts at sounding forlorn to a pre-teen fanbase. With a stellar backing band of talented musicians, including Tara Jane O'Neill, Ida Pearl, and Cynthia Nelson, Schickele imbues each track with a sullen narrative that seems to coalesce not in the songs structure but in its delivery. "Bad Day at Black Rock (Regular Girl)" is an ominous tune about distant relationships that manifest themselves in a location. More upbeat is "Fighter Dove", with Rose Thomson sharing the vocal duties, while "Telegram" reminds me of a Simon and Garfunkel tune minus the vocal apprehension. If good music is rare, then it's even rarer to actually find it. Here's a hint for you: read this review again. JBC

**Karate "Cancel/Sing" (Southern) EP-** Karate have always had a way of hitting grooves. In Geoff Farina's case, jazz is the ultimate antidote to tired songwriting. *Cancel/Sing* could be both an introduction and a treatise to Karate since it embodies so much of the band's musical soul. "Cancel" describes life like a computer program where Farina dutifully sings "Part of this safety is some routine locked in code." Maybe he's alluding to the fact that life's simpler moments might carry repeated metaphors in each passing day. It's more apparent with "Sing" when he candidly states "But even in the confines/ Of cherished daily routines/ Between history and down-time/ I still want to play." With subtle basslines and quiet accompaniments, Karate

are all about finding the right mood to show emotion. Once they get into the groove, the expression flows freely and this EP is no exception to the rule. JBC

**Kicked in the Head "Thick as Thieves" (Resurrection A.D.)-** In *Kicked in the Head*, we have modern-day fun-loving posers at its finest. This Quincy, Mass quintet gives us twelve upbeat rock tunes packed with catchy hooks, gang vocals and incalculable positive energy. Their simple and solid songwriting is at once accessible and endearing, founded on capable guitar work, forwarded by the strapping, tireless vocals of Gary Hedrick and accented with some harmonized singing and horn parts. The lyrics are usually pretty decent, off and on a little cliché, but for the most part, creative. I would like to point out that most of these songs get pretty repetitive, but I would also like to point out that this gives the listener a chance to memorize the songs after listening to them only one time. Put the disk in a second time and you're already set to sing along! AP

**David Kilgour "A Feather In The Engine" (Merge)-** You may recognize Kilgour for his work in *The Clean*. If you're not familiar with his previous contributions, don't feel bad—because you're hearing about the guy now. Many people think he's amazing and groundbreaking—for what he does. Which to the common ear is simplistic acoustic lo-fi work. What you probably won't hear upon first listen is the subtle effects and sounds that compose the overall sound. It kind of reminds me of *Neutral Milk Hotel*, who I simply adore! This comparison of his fourth solo effort is most influenced by "Today Is Gonna Be Mine." Kilgour's brand of indie is along the lines of drug-induced, swirl pop by way of strings and keys. (I'm not claiming that Kilgour partakes in that paraphernalia, I have no way of knowing!) I read somewhere that all Kilgour ever wanted was to write a clever melody, well mission accomplished. CT

**Kill Sadie "Experiments in Expectation" (Dim Mak)-** Dim Mak is such a good label. While I don't always agree with their musical predilections, I have to give them big ups on the sheer diversity and general level of talent their roster possesses. The other thing that makes Dim Mak surprising is that their label is one of the few whose releases never cease to surprise me. I've heard of (but never actually heard) all their bands and when I finally hear the bands they never sound like what I thought they would. Kill Sadie is no exception. We reviewed a 7" these Seattle kids did on One Percent Records a few years ago and I remember our misguided reviewer said they were metalcore. At the same time, I know they have ex-members of

# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: RS | Jonah Bayer: JB | Jason Murphy: JM | du proserpio: dup | Adam Parks: AP |

Jonah Brucker-Cohen: JBC | Tyler Bussey: TB | Celeste Tabora: CT | Nick Twisp: NT

Dilling 4, so I was totally baffled by the metalcore tag. Of course, metalcore is highly misleading for this band as they range from screamo Moss Icon/Crown Hate Ruin type hardcore to Black Heart's Procession dreamy meanderings to feedback laden drum/bass assaults—sometimes in the course of a single song. Overall, I like what I hear. I can't see myself throwing this in my stereo a regular basis but it's very interesting, very chaotic, and energetic enough to keep your walkman crackling for days. Metalcore indeed. Recommended. RS

**Knuckledust** "Time Won't Heal This" (Thorp) A British take on the heavy, thuggish East Coast 90's hardcore sound. It's solid crunchy stuff that sounds pretty good until the vocals kick in. A UK descendent of Rick Ta Life (ok, he sounds better than Rick, so I guess he's closer to Roger Miret) who takes on the tired snarl-and-yap that has graced all too many stomp records of the past 8 years. Sure, there's a few good songs where the energy eclipses the posturing but it doesn't add up to much. I'm trying to like this record, since it does have a certain "Agnosticky" speediness to the guitars but the fact that the singer is only tolerable 1/3 of the time combined with billing of "fierce old school hardcore" on the insert kills it for me. Of course, the pit gangstas will love it but that's modern hardcore for ya. dup

**The Lawrence Arms** "Apathy and Exhaustion" (Fat Wreck Chords)- I was totally excited to get this CD to review (this rarely happens) because The Broadways (from whence members of The Lawrence Arms came) were one of my favorite punk rock bands. I was really disappointed (this is more like what usually happens) to find that little-to-none of The Broadways' sound, politics, or emotion carried over into "Apathy and Exhaustion". What these guys do seem to have are a reverence for all things Fat Wreck and what we'll call a "healthy respect" for good old Blink 182. Honestly, four out of the eleven

songs begin with vocal parts that are, in one way or another, direct rip-offs of that Blink song that goes "Late night, come home, work sucks, [something something]". So that is disappointing. The production of this album is great, but a little sterile. Typically Fat. The thing that makes this record stand out from the rest of the label's roster is the ceaseless cynicism and self-loathing upon which the whole product seems to float. Aptly titled "Apathy and Exhaustion", this CD is a testament to disenchantment with city life and the American dream. Though the fatigue comes through, the need to rock comes through

stronger and you're left with the feeling that this band is for real, that the Blink thing might just be an oversight. So if you are a fanatic of the pop-punk, and have yet to discover The Lawrence Arms, consider checking out what might not be the freshest sound, but what, within the sound, is certainly a fresh perspective. AP

**The Lawrence Arms/The Chinkees "Present Day Memories" (Asian Man)** Aside from the record label connection, this feels like an unlikely pairing for a split. I'm thinking that the kids who buy this and like both bands equally will be the minority here, but oh well. When the first song, "Quincentuple Your Money", hit, I knew I was going to enjoy The Lawrence Arms' side, and it wasn't the Simpsons sample that tipped me off. No, the bouncy bass line and melodic power chords are what gave it away. What became apparent by the end of their half of the split was that each of their four songs are quite different. This is because vocalists Chris and Brendan, who I assume are the main songwriters, have two entirely different styles, developed, I'm sure, from different musical backgrounds (The Lawrence Arms is one of the many bands to be formed out of the demise of Slapstick, and – to be more current – the breakup of The Broadways). Chris writes controlled, mid-tempo songs, which have an almost Leatherface-esque tinge to them. His voice is not nearly as gruff as Frankie Stubbs', though – instead, his singing turns from scratchy to smooth and back again. Brendan's songs are quite different, being slightly more frenetic, and easily more erratic; like most speedy pop-punk, but fortunately, their drummer can play more than one beat. His voice is much more melodic than Chris' and a bit whiny, but without reaching the point of annoyance. The first and fourth tracks rocked my world a bit more than the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, but it's a close call. Chris' "Quincentuple Your Money" really is a gem, with its sing-along lyrics and catchy-as-hell verses, while Brendan's "100 Resolutions" is the song I was singing to myself on New Year's Eve. It's truly the most optimistic songs I've heard in recent memory. In short, this split is worth the money for the Lawrence Arms side alone, so you can stop reading here unless you wish to view my thoughts on The Chinkees' side. Their side is a bit of a head-turner, too, but in a different way... more surprising than flat-out rocking.

Based on what little previous knowledge I had of them, I expected mostly ska, but instead got a few songs of distorted power chords and an organ. There is one ska song, and even an acoustic track at the end. I assume this came from Mike Park's performances at the Plea For Peace tour, because it sounds live, but I could be wrong. I don't hate the Chinkees side, but I usually end up skipping it and opting for the Lawrence Arms side instead. Overall, though, this split is fantastic. TB

**Laymen Terms** "An Introduction" (Soda Jerk) EP- Having heard good things about this band from a friend, who saw them a few months backed and liked them, I was psyched to get the chance to listen to this band. From what I can tell, they're not half bad. They've definitely got a knack for writing some very catchy choruses. However, at the other parts of the song, things usually get dull. The singer's voice doesn't gel too well with the music, which is energetic at times and more subdued at others. He's not

aggressive or emotional enough for my tastes; sounding like you're waiting for the song to end doesn't work when you're the one singing it. The lyrics range from girls and rough relationships to suicide (on "Thin Ice", which has an enjoyable piano part ending the song, and flows straight into the next song). Vocally and stylistically, this reminds me of Alkaline Trio (on *Maybe I'll Catch Fire*, specifically), a band which Laymen Terms lists as an influence in the promo sheet that came with this. The biggest differences between these two bands are that the songs of the latter aren't nearly as catchy or easy to sing along with as that of the former, and that Alk 3 has a much tighter, more complex sound. Still, you might want to check it out if you're into melodic, poppy rock with a punk influence. I guess I'm just not as impressed as I thought I'd be, considering what my friend had said about them. Like I said before, they're pretty good, and three of these songs are definitely keepers – the other four simply aren't as catchy and aren't as enjoyable to listen to. TB

**Lefty's Deceiver** "Process Junior" (My Pal God) EP- For most of the records that we review here at LOI, I can listen to the first couple tracks and get a pretty accurate idea of what the album is going to sound like. Lefty's Deceiver are an exception to this rule, but they're worth the extra effort. This six song EP is more of the Lefty's D.C.-inspired meanderings, and it really reminds me of the Dismemberment Plan with its complex yet quirky arrangements and guitar-heavy explorations. I don't what else to say about this release except that if you're a fan of Dischord, De Soto, or Built to Spill, you won't be disappointed. JB

**Liars Academy** "No News is Good News" (Equal Vision)- This is the third copy of this CD I've been sent in the last month. I can't find the first copy; it's probably in my room somewhere, but it's pretty messy at the moment. The second copy I gave to my friend Bruce. He didn't like it at first, but then the other day we were talking and he said something to the effect of "Jonah, that Liars Academy CD is really starting to grow on me." Then again, Bruce is a really big fan of Cross My Heart and Liars Academy features one of its members – guitarist/singer Ryan Shelkett. I also liked Cross My Heart, but not as much as Bruce. I was a bigger fan of Blank, the D.C. pop-punk band that was the precursor to CMH. What do I think about Liars Academy? Well, a few of the songs, like "Meanstreet," sounded like lost Blank songs, which made me smile. But for the most part, this sounded like Mr. Shelkett has been listening to way too much modern rock. Maybe someone left an Everclear CD at his house after a party and he decided to just throw it in to, you know, see what it sounded like. Then he started watching TRL. Then he started going down to Times Square and holding a CARSON RULES sign. I'll bet he wore a disguise, just to make sure no one recognized him. It's a slippery slope. I would probably wait until Liars Academy breaks up (since Shelkett's bands have a pretty quick turnover rate), and keep your fingers crossed that someone leaves a Jawbreaker CD at his house next time he has a party. JB

**Lower Forty-Eight** "HalfBack" (King of Sticks)- This is an instance of production quality breaking a record (in the "make or break" sense, not in the "most home-runs in a season" sense). *HalfBack* is comprised of eleven tracks, with styles ranging from epic prog-rock-esque voyages to swingy, jazzy jams to droning minimalist chants. The songs are littered with vocals, but are never organized in such a way as to prompt recurring hooks or choruses. Several tracks are just straight instrumentals, which is fine

11

Light  
Weight  
Pretty  
To Think  
So?" (Your Best  
Guess)- Isn't it pretty to think this band would actually have an alarmingly fresh and new sound? Well, thinking about it is as far as it's gonna get. The soft-rock, easy-listening music they provide leave no real impression – positive or negative. I feel like I've just watched someone trip and eat shit really bad in a crowded bar. You know, I'm really embarrassed for them – lead singer Joshua Dawson in particular. His forced-fragile vocals (a la Simply Red or Morrissey) just aren't convincing enough. This attempt at beauty in aural art may not be the dead-end for Light Heavy Weight. There is lots of room for improvement; No where to move but up. CT

**Limp (Honest Don's)**- Musical maturation is a mysterious process in the underground. When a hardcore band suddenly begins to write songs that sound like Radiohead or, worse yet, Blink 182 everyone under the sun cries sour grapes. However, when the guys in Metallica stop playing super-fast, hard-as-fuck music and begin to write honest-to-goodness top 40 hits you don't hear much in the way of complaints. But, there are some places where bands refuse to grow up, and, often times, simply refuse to change. One of those places is the Fat Wreck/Honest Don's camp where pop bands are pop bands till death do you part or whatever. The bands on this label simply do not mature, they just get better (or worse) but they never seem to change from being pop bands. Which isn't so bad if you're a band like Limp who play unique and interesting pop-punk as well as any band on the label. The only problem is that I have their first album, *Pop and Disorderly*, and I like it a lot. Now, tell me why I'd need another disc that sounds exactly like it. RS

**Lovesick** (Makoto Recordings)- This record should have the kids dancing in the aisles in a punk/emo sort of way. And I'll bet live, this band is great; you can probably hear in the music the pain and whatnot reflected in the lyrics. But on record, the guitars and drums are mixed SO bad, they sound really thin and flimsy, which really betrays the picture painted by the lyrics. This shouldn't stop you from buying the record, as I am a notorious sound geek. Hopefully, if enough people buy this record, the band can spring for better production and then the next batch of songs will really rip through your speakers. A good CD that has some emo tendencies but still has plenty of drive and brashness; one would hope the next is even better. JM

**Lower Forty-Eight** "HalfBack" (King of Sticks)- This is an instance of production quality breaking a record (in the "make or break" sense, not in the "most home-runs in a season" sense). *HalfBack* is comprised of eleven tracks, with styles ranging from epic prog-rock-esque voyages to swingy, jazzy jams to droning minimalist chants. The songs are littered with vocals, but are never organized in such a way as to prompt recurring hooks or choruses. Several tracks are just straight instrumentals, which is fine



because the vocals on this record are not a strong point anyway, being somewhat nondescript, and often only serving to reveal the cheap

quality of the recording. The admirable thing about this record, despite the production, is that it manages to incorporate a diversity of sounds and feels without incorporating definite genres. Here you'll find almost an hour of music that is continually changing, building and refreshing itself without once resorting to an easily discernable style. If polished up a bit, this album could be quite respectable. AP

**Mark Mallman and Vermont "No One Really Knows How or Why He Came to Visit"** (*Guilt Ridden Pop*)- I wonder if Vermont is still the most white state in America? Anyway, this is some low-key indie rock stuff that never really breaks free of confines of the genre. It is pleasant enough, but nothing ever seems to jump out at the listener. Well, other than the piano and keyboards, which are some points nothing short of beautiful. The singer sounds like has a rough quality to his voice but it's a kindergarten, twee rough (as opposed to Tom Waits rough). It all adds up to a record that is not a bad listen, but really not worth going out of yr way for. Truth be told, I would rather be listening to Grandaddy. Or Kraftwerk (but that's a whole other thing). JM

**Greg Markel "Hard Grammer"** (*Mag Wheel Recovery Records*)- It becomes more apparent that these days the tag of "singer-songwriter" doesn't have to mean some dude with an acoustic guitar who gigs weekly at the local coffee shop. Greg Markel is the antithesis of that false connotation. Markel wrote, performed, and recorded everything on this disc himself. The robust layers of each song burst with strong melodies and strong changes. Genre-wise it sounds pretty much like a mix between the sultry side of Wham! and any major label late 90s alternative rock. His voice owns the smoothness of Lenny Kravitz, while his instrumentation owns the prowess of any alt-rock Grammy winner of the last 10 years. One complaint I have is that the feelings behind the songs seem absent, as if Markel's sensitivity to the lyrics are floating somewhere above the last instrumental layer of the track. You can't win them all, I suppose - at least with this you get close. CT

**Mastodon "Lifesblood"** (*Relapse*) EP- This begins with a great vocal sample into a sick fast metal song that feels impenetrably constructed but still sounds great. The vocals are deep and growled, something that I'm not always into but they seem to come in waves, undulating and crashing yet never out of place. The singers manage such amazing roaring vocals that they seep into the framework of the song itself. I suppose that's why this would be considered "extreme metal"-- a sub-sub-genre that's not inaccurate. The third song slows it down a little bit for some doom-like elements but soon after brings the chaos back. It's not surprising to find out that 2 members of the band were in Today Is The Day but the sound isn't really that similar. The guitars seem to be being literally wrung out in gymnastic playing and the drums keep this unpredictable assault churning and mutating. Amazingly well played metal that sounds like

nothing else. Relapse drops another one on us, the unsuspecting. dup

**Mates of State "Our Constant Concern" (*Polyvinyl*)**- Wow, Polyvinyl is turning into one of the best labels out there for quality indie pop. While I had them figured as an outfit out of tricks after their two most successful bands became either boring or broken-up, namely Rainer Maria and Braid respectively. But, man was I wrong. After hearing their recent releases, which I greedily snatched up for myself this issue, I am convinced that Polyvinyl is easily up there with Saddle Creek and Jade Tree for releasing the best music over the last few years. Mates of State, of course, are no exception. Obvious comparisons would point in the Rainer Maria direction due to the cutesy girl-boy dual vocals. Plus, both bands seem to have singers who simply "can't take their eyes off each other while they play" as a New York Times writer wrote of this San Francisco band. However, this band is so much more (or so much less, depending on how you look at it) than Rainer Maria. While I can't help but feel that Rainer Maria's best stuff is behind them, I could easily see myself shelling out ten clams for the next few Mates records if they're as adorably earnest as this one. Keyboard/drums/vocals make for remarkably full-sounding pop not unlike the Free to be You and Me soundtrack meets Mary Lou Lord. This record is great, I've been listening to it for two weeks and I notice some new subtlety to the music every time-which is certainly a feat when you consider the number of instruments employed (2). RS

**Matt Pond PA "The Green Fury"** (*Polyvinyl*)- I had never heard of Matt Pond or the guise under which he and his multi-talented cohorts record their music, but I can say this band has a new fan for life. Matt Pond, who sings; and plays guitar and trumpet, is joined by a drummers, cellists, violinists, woodwinds, and keys on this 13-song masterpiece full of melancholy dreamscapes that would be perfect to listen to when sitting by a lake drinking a cup of tea. I usually don't give such Maxwell House moments in reviews, but seriously, this is some of the most thoughtful, pensive music I've heard in a long time-and I think calling it "emo" or "indie" rock would be cheapening it. Regardless of the fact that Mr. Pond's voice sounds strikingly like Davey of the Promise Ring, this is a beautiful record from the first song to the last. I highly recommend this. RS

**Mayday "Old Blood"** (*Saddle Creek*)- I can see where it would require some patience for a listener to get through this album. However, if you can let this disc whisk you away with its guitar-driven twists and turns - you could be in for a lambent glow of a relaxing ride. For instance - "Confession" has an olden-days Spanish vibe, while "Pilot" contains more of an acoustic alchemy ancestry, and "Tone/Atone/Atonal" divulges secrets of an acute crush on the Cocteau Twins. You can see how all these comparisons are laid-back but not prone to put you to sleep. The whole album is so lulling it could serve as a decompression ritual, yet it's alive enough that it must be disregarded as a lullaby. Overall, Mayday may take an acquired taste towards the easy-going. CT

**The Melvins "Hostile Ambient Takeover" (*Ipecac*)**- How does one attempt to introduce the Melvins? They were the grunge band who

never got rich, never had a hit-single, and were too abrasive for the mainstream to handle, yet they were cited in nearly every flannel-clad interview in the early 90's as a key influence. I never really got into them during the grunge heyday, but their brand-new release, *Hostile Ambient Takeover*, is just that and proves that these big-haired Washingtonians can still innovate now matter what decade they're in. From pummeling fuzzed out aggression, to staccato surf speed picking, to engulfing noise, the band reaches out and grabs you through the speakers and smashes your head into the nearest sharp edge. And it feels great. The vocals are a bit too Rob Zombie at some points, but for the most part they mix well with the sludgy syncopated Sabbath riffing and inventive guitar acrobatics. Hey poseurs (myself included), it's not too late to start listening to the Melvins and this record is the perfect introduction to punk rock's under appreciated kings. JB

**Stephin Merritt "Eban & Charley" (*Merge*)**- While I've overheard this film discussed in some high-brow motion picture discussions, I've heard nothing of the soundtrack. I have to admit, though, I totally appreciate it's robust sound attributed by clearly well thought out production, the soundtrack is not exactly for the mainstream listener. Many tracks feel lonesome, like "Some Summer Day." "O Tannenbaum" is a creepy version of what we recognize as "Oh Christmas Tree." You remember, you probably sang it in some elementary school Christmas production like I once did. Stephin Merrit's (*Magnetic Fields*, *The 6ths*, *The Gothic Archies*, *Future Bible Heroes*) voice is mesmerizing, and very manly. "Maria Maria Maria" - about the leading lady of the film - is simply romantic! It makes you want to change your name. (When is someone going to write a song about a Celeste?) "Titles" sounds like a scene in *Juvent* and *Caro's Delicatessen*. I can't think of any mood you would be in to put this in your player - then again, lord knows what mood I'm in when I put in *Angelo Badalamenti's "Twin Peaks" soundtrack*... CT

**Mid Carson July "Wessel" (*Fueled By Ramen*)**- One of the best things about punk rock is that anyone can pick up a guitar and start a band... but that doesn't mean everyone should. Mid Carson July aren't a terrible band: they seem relatively competent at their instruments, have some interesting guitar interplay, and seem pretty enthusiastic about what they are doing. However, this record just doesn't do anything for me. Aside from a few hybrid moments, their Face-to-Face-meets-Ann-Beretta-meets-Kid-Dynamite brand of punk rock is really, well, boring. We've heard these same progressions recycled for the past twenty years, and MCJ really doesn't do anything memorable to deviate themselves from any other punk act on the market. This might make good background music for playing video games or something, but that's about it. JB

**Mighty Flashlight (Jade Tree)**- When you hear this CD, you will not think of Fugazi. In fact, you would probably be shocked to learn that Mike Fellows (playing solo here under the pseudonym Mighty Flashlight) used to lay down the bass for Fugazi frontman Guy Picciotto's former rock band, Rites of Spring. The patently Dischord sound supplied by Rites of Spring does not suggest for a second the feel of the music found in Mighty Flashlight. With this solo project, Fellows presents thickly

layered folk songs with somewhat timeless guitar picking, brought into modernity by minimalist sequenced drums, looped sounds and absurdist lyrics. Though the recording quality is excellent, this record is definitely very raw and deep-felt, a point that distinguishes Fellows' songwriting from the somewhat mechanical outputs of other rock-men-acoustic-soloists. For a quirky, yet catchy musical jaunt, check this disc out. AP

**Millencolin "Home From Home" (*Epitaph/Burning Heart*)**- Is mild punk a category yet? Well, it should be. Millencolin provide easy-to-listen-to, polished, punk rock with a pop persuasion. Many of the songs are painfully (and probably intentionally) simple and catchy. It makes me feel like I'm kind of cheated, as if the band feels their potential listeners or future fans are easily entertained. You won't find any complex parts or interesting changes. Every note and any structure you'll find on this disc is predictable, down to the vocalists' style of singing. Though the band hails from Sweden, they hit the "So-Cal" (particularly Orange County) punk sound pretty much on it's head with every second that passes on this 40 minute disc. Listen closely to "Man or Mouse," "Happiness For Dogs," "Greener Grass," or any of *Home From Home's* thirteen tracks, and you'll have to be hearing impaired not to agree. CT

**Miracle of 86 "Kevin Kolankowski" (*Immigrant Sun*)**- Miracle of 86's tribute to their fill-in drummer, Kevin Kolankowski, sounds a lot like what the Get Up Kids would have sounded like if they had recorded an acoustic album sometime between *Woodson* and *Four-Minute Mile*, but with the guy from *Jimmy Eat World* singing. A bit mundane and a bit behind it's time, this album features six acoustic originals and covers of Pavement's "Range Life" and Bob Dylan's "One Too Many Mornings". The originals pair straightforward four-chord rock progressions with personal and illustrative lyrics to arrive at the aforementioned acoustic-emo sound. The covers on *Kevin Kolankowski* are well-done, but the personality that each song loses - in singer Kevin Devine's vocals supplanting the original vocals - is not replaced by anything particularly engaging. So don't get so excited. AP

**Moment "Songs for the Self-Destructive" (*Espo*)**- I am going to go out on a limb and tell you, the loyal readers of *LOI*, that I found myself enjoying this record. Sure, it's emo (which has been a derogatory term for some time now). Sure, it does the well-traveled "soft-then-loud" formula that is currently putting gas money in bands' touring vans all over the world. But you know what? Sometimes this formula sets right, and you have a record that is fun and heartfelt and worth throwing on to get spirits

# Death by Stereo

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raised. This is a solid half hour of music that will have your head bobbing and you singing along. Ah, to be young and wearing white T-shirts and flood water jeans.... JM

**Most Precious Blood "Nothing in Vain" (Trustkill)**- Some bands complain of having the worst luck time and time again and get nothing done in the midst of whining. Others do have bad luck more often than not but work their asses off to insure that their misfortune does not overtake and consume them. Most Precious Blood, arising from the ashes of the great Indecision, are one such band. One might ask why this New York City hardcore outfit decided to change their name when they retained virtually the same members as the original Indecision line-up. If you ask me, the answer lies in the band parting ways with former Milhouse misfit, Artie Philie, and at the same time attempting to leave that bad luck behind them once and for all. How is the music you ask? Well, if you've heard one Indecision record, you've heard them all—they're all either really good or really mediocre depending on your opinion. I think these Brooklynites are one of the only truly original presences in northeastern hardcore right now, even if they really haven't abandoned their chugga-chugga death-odes since their inception. At their best, Most Precious Blood are a steam train blazing ahead at full speed with a conductor eager to mow down anything in his/her path. At worst, all the songs seem to blend together. At the very least these four kids seem as pissed off as ever—more pissed off than most agro bands today—and have come to kick some ass. Oh yeah, as always, they've brought their very dubious worldviews and political outlooks to the melee as well. Music to kill to if I ever heard any. RS

**Most Secret Method "Our Success" (Superbad)**- Usually, I think that live recordings aren't the best introduction to a band. The quality is often shoddy, good live shows are often sloppy, and it's hard to really fully appreciate a live rendition of your favorite song unless you can compare it to the original—that's the fun part. Well, I've never heard Most Secret Method before, but I think this record is, to quote MTV's VJ Sway, "da bomb." At this point in the review, I would normally list two or three bands that MSM sound like, and that's the tough part. The DC sound is undeniably present and at times these guys (and girl) remind me of Jawbox, but overall this is pretty original stuff. The most amazing aspect of this band is the huge sound they achieve with only three instruments. Being a guitar player, I was really drawn to the way

that Mark M100 is able to alternate between shimmering melodic lines and discordant noise so effortlessly that you forget that he's the sole six-stringer. Im-puh-res-ive. If you like your rock with the "post" prefix, MSM may be your most favorite new band. JB

**The Movielife "...Has A Gambling Problem" (Drive-Thru)** EP- Carson Daly is this band's new biggest fan... and oh my god! They're dating the girls in Josie and the Pussycats. No, not really—but their music makes you think they should be. "If Only Duct Tape Could Fix Everything" is an endearing title, but that's as far as that song's redeeming quality goes. Their label, Drive Thru seems to be in a torrid destructive love-affair with Blink-182 type of pop punk. I feel like bands like this are underestimating the public's taste in music and feeding us dung. When are they going to realize that we have a huge hunger for invention? CT

**Mr. T Experience "And The Women Who Love Them – Special Addition" (Lookout!)**- This is a compilation of previous releases by MTX featuring director's cut versions of 1990's EP releases. It also features demos and unreleased tracks. MTX fans who think you've got the whole enchilada? This will complete your collection. If only for the folky version of "Sackcloth And Ashes (Demo)" alone. It will remind you exactly why you loved "We Hate All The Same Things" so much, or why you not-so-secretly pogged your way through "Alternative Is Here To Stay" time and time again. My favorite part of this "special addition" is probably the small print intro by Christopher Applegren (The Pattern, ex-PeeChees, Lookout! Records' head honcho) and the frank closing comments from MTX's commander-in-chief, Dr. Frank, the two mini-memoirs help add importance to the band's historical impact on pop punk and the East Bay Area. CT

**MU330 "LIVE....OH YEAH" (Asian Man Records)**- Is this really even necessary? MU330 has played so many shows at this point that the last thing that they should worry about is recording one of them. Maybe it's just me, but I don't think that bands that tour constantly should record live records; it's your own fault if you miss that kind of band. For example, Avail has 2 or 3 live albums! That's ridiculous, especially considering that they tour all the time. I've barely listened to them for a year and already seen them 3 times. Hot Water Music has a live disc, and they tour practically non-stop, but that was supposed to be their last show. So, that's understandable. The question is, does MU330 have a similar excuse? I don't think so, unless having played over 1300 is a milestone by their standards. They even tell us in the notes, "We'll see you at the next 1,300 shows!" Look, live records cheapen the experience of seeing the band. They DON'T enhance it. Your fans will know what to expect. I think that only the big fans and the fans that have seen MU330 before will want this record. Another criticism: at times, they try to act like rock stars. People, asking kids at a show if they're "ready to rock" was never cool, and it never will be, ok? Maybe they should have asked, "are you ready to skank?" And you know, you could definitely put this one on your stereo and skank to your hearts' content in your room, and have a good time doing it. There's nothing inherently bad about

this, as it is fairly danceable and has some personality to it, and as far as ska-punk goes, you could do a lot worse. If you like this band, and if you like this genre, you will enjoy this. I just don't think this record makes sense to begin with. Bands should probably take my advice on this one – only record live albums if you barely ever tour, are known for having absolutely amazing shows, or you're about to break up. TB

**Nekromantix "Return of the Loving Dead" (Hellcat)**- The obvious comparison to make here is to The Reverend Horton Heat, but as I thoroughly enjoyed *Return of the Loving Dead*, I will do Nekromantix the favor of not making that comparison. The Danish trio plays an authentic and masterful brand of greasy rock and roll with a tinge of "billy". Action-packed and evil from start to finish, this record rarely if ever strays from its decided themes: 1) Killing people and 2) Having sex with the people that have just been killed or people who were dead for some other reason prior to the having of the sex. The vocals are totally charged, giving you the sense that Kim (the singer, a man) and Peter (the other singer, also a man) are actually really excited about the killing and sexing. These boys also do a great job of sharing the singing duties, harmonizing and complimenting each other to produce rich, layered vocals. Far and away, the best track is "Who Killed the Cheerleader," which, I am ashamed to say, I am considering adding to my MP3 music library. We'll see how long that lasts. AP

**The Nerve Agents "The Butterfly Collection" (Hellcat)**- Apparently The Nerve Agents felt that their audience was more akin to the more typical punk sounds of Hellcat than the hardcore roots of Revelation. They're probably right, as this CD, their third, walks the line between skate-punk, hardcore, and rockabilly. I wasn't a huge fan of their first record, their second record I liked a lot, and this record is no doubt a solid production, but remains one I will throw in the back of a closet never to see the light of day again. It's not that the Nerve Agents aren't interesting, they are. Rather, there is simply nothing here that stays with the listener after each song is through or after the CD has been changed. It's not catchy—which isn't bad, of course—but the sound is just so chaotic that it's hard to find any connection to this music unless it's on top of you. Although, the two times I've seen this Bay Area outfit live they rocked the house. Synopsis: go see them live when the come to your town with Agnostic Front or AFI, then copy the CD from a friend. RS

**Nerves "World Of Gold" (Thrill Jockey)**- While Thrill Jockey has made a name for themselves with progressive jazz acts like Tortoise and the blip-and-bleep vocoder beats of Trans Am, the Nerves bluesy tendencies are more accessible for the casual listener. The stripped-down guitar and bass noodling forces the vocals to carry many of the songs, which they do successfully in a kind of Glenn-Danzig-on-downers sort of way. While the band experiments with some interesting melodies and are able to pull some original tones out of their respective instruments, this is way too repetitive for my tastes.

Maybe if the songs were about half as long they'd be more tolerable, but the songs tend to not really go anywhere; if they do it takes too long for me to notice. The Nerves sound like a live band more than anything else and I'd save my ten bucks to see 'em at a club where you can have a few beers if things get too stagnant. JB

**The New Amsterdams "Para Toda Vida" (Vagrant)**- Remember that song on the last Get Up Kids album, *Something to Write Home About*? The real slow one where the singer, Matt Pryor, is rambling about being overseas or something? I hated that song. The New Amsterdams is Pryor's solo project and whole album is pretty much a forty-minute version of that song, but for some reason I don't hate it really. Like the Get Up Kids, it's cheesy, the chord changes are so predictable that you can guess what note the guitar going to play before he hits it, and it's sort of embarrassing to listen to when your roommate comes in your room and says, "hey, what are you listening to?" But, let's face it, Further seems Forever are no GUK's, and time has proved that Pryor, unlike Dashboard, can write a damn good pop song. The sparse acoustic accompaniment lets Pryor's voice shine through and unhindered by drums and walls of distortion, it's really actually quite good. With the Get Up Kids busy re-releasing every alternate take and b-side they can get their hands on, it's nice to hear something new from their camp, at least. JB

**New End Original "Thriller" (Jade Tree Records)**- I am a big fan of Jade Tree Records. I really respect the fact that they are able to release records from bands that sound nothing alike and still seem to find put out really great music. New End Original is one of the newest artists on Jade Tree and they feature members of Far and Texas is the Reason. If you were a fan of either group, chances are you will enjoy this. I find it funny that they named the album Thriller as this album has nothing in common to the super rocking Michael Jackson album. That said, let me say that this is a well done indie-rock/emo record, but there is something missing. I like this album, but it is missing that little something that makes a good album a masterpiece. NT

**The Nobodys "Less Hits More Tits" (Hopeless)**- I was first turned off by the grotesque album artwork (definitely more tits), then by the title, then by the number of tracks they have on the disc (twenty), and again and again as every song begins. If drunk-frat-rock were a state, The Nobodys would be the house band at the most happening bar. The band was thoughtful enough to list their lyrics, like the following for the song "Another Fucker": "If I was a motherfucker then I'd fuck your mother fucker. Motherfucker!" What's the opposite of profound, again? I had a good laugh at the liner notes, in which they actually listed who was responsible for writing the songs! Clearly, someone started this joke but took it too far by pressing an album. But hello! The joke is old now; didn't you get the

13

## 41

memo? The overall impression: generic, generic, generic and distasteful. CT

Noise Ratchet "Till We Have Faces"

(The Militia Group)- First off, I really like the layout for this, it's got an aesthetically pleasing bright color scheme and sort of reminds me of *Adbusters* for some reason. The music isn't quite as politically motivated as the aforementioned magazine, but that doesn't mean it isn't pleasing in a guilty-pleasure sort of way. Noise Ratchet sound a lot like Jimmy Eat World; so much that if someone poked their head in my room right now and asked, "Hey, are you listening to Jimmy Eat World?" I would probably grin and say, "That's just what I was thinking!" Then we would share a laugh. What Noise Ratchet lack in originality they almost make up for with slickness. The recording is major label quality, and the way the songs flow into one another is seamless. The harmonies are right on, the guitar interplay is well arranged, and the transitions from heavy-head-bobbing-mid-tempo-part to quiet-hey-we're-sensitive-guy parts are pulled off with an accuracy that takes serious work to perfect. This is good for what it is, the problem merely being that it's been done before. But if that don't bug you than feel free see what all the Ratchet's about. JB

No Use For a Name "Hard Rock Bottom" (Fat Wreck)- Out of all the Epitaph/Fat Wreck So Cal melodicore bands that thrived in the mid-nineties, I've always had a special place in my heart for No Use For a Name. I liked the way that songs like "Justified Black Eye" weren't only catchy, but also had underlying social themes – or at least weren't afraid to progress beyond the sophomoric humor that NOFX patented. I also liked the way that they could actually play their instruments better than most of their power-chord-toting peers; and the fact that they weren't afraid to experiment within the boundaries of the genre. NUFAN takes some chances on this record, but as boring as it to play at the same speed after all these years, they're most successful when they stick to the fast-paced Bad Religion-esque type tunes laced with soaring vocals. The songs on *Hard Rock Bottom* are a bit more pop-tinged and less aggro, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but NUFAN falters they get too artsy and try to pile organ and cello into the mix. Of course, it's never too detrimental because you know at any moment galloping drums and crunchy chords are going to come in and obliterate the superfluous instrumentation like Screech. Did to that old guy on Celebrity Boxing, did anyone see that? This ain't half bad, but I have to insist that their cover of Sinead O'Connor's "This is a Rebel Song" on *Hard Rock Bottom* doesn't touch their legendary rendition of Bob Marley's "Redemption Song." JB

Now It's Overhead (Saddle Creek)- Like the mid-western sounds of Grandaddy, Now It's Overhead has a space-rock style pop that makes you want to float away on their dreamy choruses. Hailing from Athens, GA they combine just the right mix of nostalgia, anticipation, and noisy production value to keep the songs interesting. Although "Hi" is a nice ambient track infused with lots of catchy pop hooks, it never goes overboard in delivery and maintains a coherent feeling throughout.

Singer Andy LeMaster's (also in Bright Eyes) vocal delivery turns what could be vapid lyrics into sincere messages. With scores of helping musicians, including Maria Taylor and Orenda Fink of Azure Ray, this is definitely a worthy break from the standard tired rock formula. JBC

One Time Angels "...Tricks and Dreams" (Lookout!) EP- The press sheet claims that this band is made up of Doug from Screw 32 (who used to play for Limp if memory serves), Scotty from the Plus Ones, and Jesse Michaels of Op Ivy fame. If this is true I have two observations: 1) this band is no where near as inspired, as balls to the wall, or as interesting as Screw 32 or Op Ivy (or the Plus Ones for that matter); 2) The members of this band, all coming from very diverse outfits with varied backgrounds seem to be as uninspired on this release as a herd of old men on treadmills. Trading in hardcore or ska-punk for third rate Jawbox-esque pop that barely manages to get out of the wheelchair enough to be interesting or catchy, this band can be (and should be) easily overlooked. Lookout! will release anything these days. RS

Over My Dead Body "Rusty Medals and Broken Badges" (Indecision)- Falling on the "fast real hardcore" side of Indecision's releases, OMDB play it close to the chest with the posh hardcore thing. Apparently formed from some members of the lauded Unbroken, this retains some of the dark, heavy vibe of that band but still rests upon the 4 corners of straight-ahead rhythmic hardcore. Nice thick bass and guitar beef up the sonics but the vocals (both lead and back-ups) don't provide much to chew on. Eighty percent of the time, this comes off like "we tried to push the boundaries last time, now we'll do the classic hardcore thing with this band" which so many have fallen to. It seems like the first half of the last decade was littered with aborted attempts to broaden some of the styles that are held dear to punk and hardcore kids. Even for me, a genuine sucker for the fast, traditional straight edge sabor, this is a dish lacking any necessary spice. dup

Owen (Polyvinyl Records)- Wow...this was definitely a pleasant surprise. This is the debut solo effort of Mike Kinsella, who has had quite a history in independent music, having played in various bands, such as American Football, The Owls, and Joan Of Arc. He's been at this for over 10 years now, which explains the skilled musicianship and songwriting. On top of that, he plays every instrument on this album, which includes acoustic and electric guitar, drums, and bass, and vocals. This album is full of very soft, serene melodies created mostly by the acoustic guitar and the nearly unnoticeable bass, which are occasionally given an energy boost by the smooth drumming and electronic sounds. Many of the lyrics have to do with a relationship, such as "if you don't want to be with a deadbeat like me, I won't blame you," from the soothing "Declaration of Incompetence". The flow from song to song is almost uninterrupted, which makes the album more of a complete work than simply a collection of songs. It's pleasant, tranquil, and uplifting, with very few bad moments, which only show up when the overall mood of the album shifts into a more depressing, less musical state. And even then, it's still quite an enjoyable listen. There

are only 9 songs, which some might think is a bad thing, but it keeps the music from getting too repetitive (and trust me, it would). I don't usually go for music as soft as this is, since stuff like that tends to get boring if you hear too much of it, but I'm into this and I can easily see myself listening to it a lot. TB

Panic "Dying For It" (Bridge Nine) EP- Where was this album when I was fourteen, frustrated, and furious? I could have used it. It's like Panic decided to see if they can be the hardcore band who can play the fastest ever. And this album is a result of their experiment. To test it out, I decided to slam dance in my room. The results? It's totally do-able. On the plus side, you can feel safe in believing that these guys are tough and in turn not feel like you're moshing to closet wussies. That Fred Durst guy can totally take a hint from these Boston boys. CT

Park "No Signal" (Lobster Records)- Immediately I noticed the exploding, rich sound of the guitars – truly, their massive riffs and delicate melodies kept my interest throughout the disc. This is easily Park's strongest trait, no doubt about it. The singer, however, has that all-too-typical whine, the kind you can't fake, the kind that reduces great emo albums to simply good. One might wonder if the desperation in his voice comes from trying to sing the right notes, or from a genuine care for the words he's singing. The vocalist can be tolerated with patience, but definitely makes the album less fun. Unfortunately, some of the lyrics come off as either trite or trivial; being "awake again at 3 AM, watching TV," for example, is nothing to cry about. However, I can sense from the arrangements in songs such as "Here On And Out" and the skillful, well-executed musicianship that these guys take their band seriously. That counts for something...ultimately, almost everything here is solid, but your interest in this will likely be decided by your reaction to the vocals. If you can handle them, or learn to enjoy them, I don't see why you shouldn't buy this. TB

The Pattern "Immediately" (Lookout!)- First things first: anyone who doesn't like the direction Lookout! has taken in the past two years, abandoning their trademark Bay Area pop-punk sound for a more fashionable rock and roll oriented focus, should skip this review and go onto the next one. But, for those of you who appreciate the new and improved Lookout! – as I do with Ted Leo and Black Cat Music – might find the Pattern appealing, if not amusing. The press sheet for this release modestly proclaims, "The Pattern are one of the most electrifying bands in the U.S. right now," and I could not disagree more. Some may find charm in the retro stylings of the Strokes or the White Stripes, and while I do not share their enthusiasm I find those two bands far more interesting than The Pattern. Musically, The Pattern are playing simple, uninspired garage rock and roll along the lines of Black Cat Music, but what makes The Pattern stand alone amongst the new breed of rock and rollers is that their singer possesses one of the worst voices in music today. I never ever liked the Pee-chees and even though I remember not liking them because I had a very narrow musical scope back then I think the reality is because Chris' nasally piercing singing is amazingly annoying. Actually, now that I think about it, if The Pattern had Iggy Pop singing for them they might just be wonderful. As it stands now, this is killing me softly. The Pattern can talk all they want about standing up there with the Strokes

and the White Stripes but the fact remains to me: the people who hail the Strokes as the second coming of the messiah are misguided, but not as misguided as the person who wrote The Pattern's press sheet. RS

Pedro the Lion "Control" (Jade Tree)-

David Bazan is much more than a musician: he's a storyteller, a cynic, a poet, a voyeurist, a politician, and someone who understands the darker side of human nature with Freud-like insight. While *Control* isn't laid out in neat chapters like his political-murder-conspiracy audio novella, *Winners Never Quit* – Bazan's new offering speaks volumes as he describes desperate people in desperate situations without ever patronizing or passing judgment on his subjects. The songs on *Control* mark a dynamic shift in Bazan's compositions. It's rumored that instead of performing as strictly with a drummer, a five-piece band will accompany him this tour...and he'll need them to recreate the multifarious nature of this album. Instead of relying on the sparse instrumentation of his prior releases, it's like someone gave Bazan a distortion pedal for the holidays and forced him to incorporate it into his new material. And he does so, brilliantly, transporting him from the realm of artsy-coffeehouse-folk to full-fledged rock territory. The result is more varied songs: the crescendos more exaggerated, bordering on orgasmic, the energy finally paralleling the passion in Bazan's inflection. The newfound instrumentation is used in different ways, not necessarily to make the songs louder, but to fit the individual mood. During "Penetration," drummer Casey Foubert complements the driving rhythms by playing aggressively but unpredictably – holding back when the song calls for it and blasting out rave-like rat-tat-tat fills when the momentum sways him. Whereas on a song like "Second Best," the guitars don't even seem to be playing notes, instead emitting carefully orchestrated wails of feedback which alternate back and forth between speakers as if they are speaking their own secret language. But Bazan hasn't abandoned his past, and the album's final track, "Rejoice," finds him once again puttering along a dirt road of minor chords at a comatose pace as he mutters a single sentence so slowly that each word has the significance of a tidal wave. "Keyboards emulate a choir in the background, and he repeats the word "Rejoice" over and over and over like it's all that matters in the universe, and then, like that, it's over. No gradual fade, no dramatic ending, it's like he just stood up, unplugged his guitar, and walked out of the room. By the end of the song, even though you may want to slit you wrists, you'll feel something strangely warm inside as well. Because buried beneath the depressing droning there's an underlying theme of hopefulness at awe and everything around

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us. Rejoice. JB

**Penfold "Our First Taste Of Escape" (Miligram Records)**- The way I see it is that there are a wide variety of things that music should accomplish. There are records that can transport you to another place, causing your mind to wander aimlessly, and there are others that can put you in a trance-like state. Sometimes, a record can simply provide you with a way to escape – to leave the world behind, if even for a moment. And the moments where these events occur are usually brief, even in the best music. That's what makes the title of this album fitting: it provides a way to escape. In this album's case, those moments are brief, but they're there and they keep popping up, song after song. Penfold's most delicate moments are when they're at their best, whether they show it with piano parts or the soothing guitar lines and refined singing. These parts are also the easiest to lose yourself in, with the loudest parts breaking through every now and then, to shake things up. Many times, I trail off and on again while listening to this one, losing my train of thought, but I always find my way back to it and to the songs. And I even get lost in the lyric sheet. It's really that good. TB

**Pinhead Circus (Not Bad Records) EP**- At first I thought this was that band that Billy Joe from Green Day was in, but after listening to it and reading the liner notes, I realized that was actually Pinhead Gunpowder. Initially, I was sort of bummed because I like Pinhead Gunpowder. It was sort of like when you go to see the new Steven Segal movie and then you find out it was *directed by Steven Spielberg*, and you read the sign wrong and they won't give you your money back even when you complain to the manager. Pinhead Circus is actually pretty good in a Dilinger-Four-goes-to-a-barbeque-at-Strung-Out's-beach-house sort of way. They also cover a Prince song without completely butchering it, which is quite a task.

If you like galloping drum beats, palm-muted guitars, and strong melodies, then Pinhead Circus is worth picking up, even if no one from Green Day is in the band. JB

**Pinq "Quiet Games for hot Weather" (Major7)**- Regular readers of *Law of Inertia* know that we get a lot of records in the mail... and most of them are bad. Now whether this is due to cheaper recording costs, more independent labels, or the fact that a band as awful as the Benjamins can get signed, it remains that used CD stores won't even take most of the records jammed into our P.O. Box. However, once in a while, a band comes along out of

nowhere and reminds us of initial joy at seeing a big brown envelope in your mailbox...Pinq is one those bands. Like Mogwai, Pinq really need to be listened to on headphones – preferably stoned. I've read a few reviews of Pinq which compare them to Grandaddy, but that's not entirely accurate. Pinq's compositions are much more multi-textured than Jason Lytle and co., and have a more hovering quality to them – like you could sort of float of into space while listening to the soothing drone of "Drinking Song" and not even notice... until the drums kick in. Pinq's secret talent is shifting gears between ethereal string sections and feedback-soaked digressions so smoothly that you barely notice. Without being pretentious, the band are able to manipulate electric hisses and pile them on top of traditional arrangements without it resulting in a muddy mess of 1's an 0's. *Quiet Games* is a diverse record with many moods, though melancholy comes with comes with the territory. It's a land where arpeggiators mix with slide guitar, where practice-amp distortion melds with pristine minor chords, and where pop sensibility melds with avant-garde spoken word. And, somehow, Pinq not only makes it work, but is able to piece all this segments together to create one of the most stunning albums I've heard this year. JB

**The Plan "Only These Movements Remain" (Matlock Records/Rewika Records) EP**- At first I thought this was that band that Billy Joe from Green Day was in, but after listening to it and reading the liner notes, I realized that was actually Pinhead Gunpowder. Initially, I was sort of bummed because I like Pinhead Gunpowder. It was sort of like when you go to see the new Steven Segal movie and then you find out it was *directed by Steven Spielberg*, and you read the sign wrong and they won't give you your money back even when you complain to the manager. Pinhead Circus is actually pretty good in a Dilinger-Four-goes-to-a-barbeque-at-Strung-Out's-beach-house sort of way. They also cover a Prince song without completely butchering it, which is quite a task.

If you like galloping drum beats, palm-muted guitars, and strong melodies, then Pinhead Circus is worth picking up, even if no one from Green Day is in the band. JB

**Pinq "Quiet Games for hot Weather" (Major7)**- Regular readers of *Law of Inertia* know that we get a lot of records in the mail... and most of them are bad. Now whether this is due to cheaper recording costs, more independent labels, or the fact that a band as awful as the Benjamins can get signed, it remains that used CD stores won't even take most of the records jammed into our P.O. Box. However, once in a while, a band comes along out of

**Poison the Well "Tear from the Red" (Trustkill)**- Maybe I'm not paying enough attention but I simply have no idea what the name of this record means. Regardless here we have the much hyped follow-up to the stellar *Opposite of December* release these Miami kids pumped out a couple of years ago. The beauty of that record is that the band wasn't very big when they released it, thus no one was really paying attention. The result was that the album was heavy, intense, catchy, and angst. This edition was made under some serious scrutiny from Poison the Well's new legions of fans and to be perfectly honest... it shows. The riffs aren't as interesting, the vocals are hardly as chaotic, and the overall mood is a bit flatter... as if the band simply ran out of ideas midway through the writing process. After a hard day's work in the studio the band has turned out a record full of songs that all sound very similar to one another (with the exception of a brilliant acoustic track) with a notably darker atmosphere than their last record – which still showed a profound sense of hope in its madness. Here, the *Apocalypse Now* sample simply sounds forced. I'll be waiting for the next record. RS

**Portastatic "The Perfect Little Door" (Merge) EP**- Back for another EP, Mac McCaughan (Superchunk) revisits old Portastatic tunes with a new, jazzy twist. This time he's enlisted the support of Chicago heavyweights, Ken Vandermark and Tim Mulvenna to pour on the free-flowing interludes and improvisation. Surprisingly, these adaptations of McCaughan's humble pop tunes actually impress upon the originals. Despite his whiny voice, McCaughan's true strength lies in his innate ability to concoct sweet ballads that tell innocent stories of lost love. When infused with jazzy personalities, these songs sound more like monuments to Mac's illustrious past than merely new adaptations of past Portastatic hits. Sappy and heartfelt, it's a wonder you don't cry at the mere mention of "home" in songs like "Hey Salty" and "When You Crashed". Even though there's more playfulness here than the other Portastatic LPs, I would stick to the originals first. JBC

**Pretty Girls Make Graves (Dim Mak) EP**- Does this mean pretty girls dig graves proficiently, or pretty girls are in themselves 'graves,' and we just don't realize it yet? Whatever the name means, you should know that PGMG rose out of the ashes of Murder City Devils and features their bassist Derek Fudesco. Musically, it sounds like a tad more technical version of Murder City with a strong At the Drive-in influence (the two bands did tour together for the majority of a year). The female vocals are a nice touch and help separate it from the majority of acts in this genre, and musically this is layered enough to stay interesting over multiple listens. However, something about this seems forced; while Murder City wasn't genre-defying for any means (Uh, ever hear of the Misfits, dude?) they still managed to carve their own niche in the punk underground via solid songwriting, brilliant merchandising, and constant touring. PGMG may have the potential to do that as well, but they're going to need to rely on the

songs rather than the "ex-member" crutch, and this release proves inconclusive to whether they'll be able to pull it off. Luckily for Fudesco, if you saw him in *The Edge of Quarrel*, you know he can always fall back on his acting career. JB

**Pretty Girls Make Graves "Good Health" (Lookout!)**- Contrary to what my sometimes dense co-editor told you in his review of this band, I not only love the name of their band but I also think Pretty Girls are a very exciting band. Musically, the drumming (and electronic noodling) is frenetically executed in a style very very similar to At the Drive-In – to point that some might very accurately accuse these guys and girl of ripping off the style thereof – but Pretty Girls Make Graves are for more concerned with discernable hooks and melody that ATDI. Throughout this disc that compiles three 3-song EPs there is a girl-boy vocal interplay that makes others like Rainer Maria seem downright sentimental by comparison. As a matter of fact, the vocals here remind me far more of Blondie or Concrete Blonde than anything coming out of the Polyvinyl imprint. Overall, a very interesting punk CD. This could be a band to watch. RS

**Prevent Falls "A Newer More Shattered You" (Equal Vision)**- It suddenly occurred to me as I examined the jewel case which accompanied this CD that few reviewers if any every comment on album titles. Maybe people feel they shouldn't be judged along with the actual music on the record. I disagree. Here at LOI I instruct my reviewers to critique anything they feel appropriate, from the politics displayed by the band to the promo photo to the lyrical content to the recording quality. So, practicing what I preach I'm going to say that too many bands have really deep, profound album titles that they think gets to the heart of their band. Too bad so many of them are pretentious, seemingly thoughtful headers that do nothing to convey what the music is about or what it sounds like. In short, this album title is unclear, unoriginal, and stupid. The music, however, is pretty good. I saw this band live a few weeks ago and they weren't half bad. Aside from their singer's whiny, somewhat annoying voice, the guitars were thick and warm, the drums were adept and tight, and the bass provided enough of a base-coat so as not to be noticed (which in this case isn't a bad thing). Upon hearing this record the guitars sound warm, but poorly recorded, the singer's voice is even more annoying on tape than record, and the lyrics are flat out stupid. I'm not going to embarrass Jeff, who wrote them, with specifics but a high school garage band could write better poetry. Listen, this isn't too bad, so I don't want to trash it. But, this is not nearly as mature as I'd hope from a band on EVR. RS

**Pulley "Together For the First Time" (Epitaph)** – I'd like to have a look at an Epitaph record contract, the small print and everything. The bands must get a really amazing royalty rate or something, because it seems bands on the label never break up – they just multiply into offshoots and side-projects

15

or keep putting records into infinity. Though Pulley is best known for the fact that their singer Scott Radinsky is a major league baseball player, they also do the whole SoCal melodic punk thing better than most of their NOFX-worshipping peers. I'm sorry, is it me or do these guys not own a pair of pants that reach beneath their knees? Anyway, this sort of reminded me of Guns N' Wankers, who remind me of Lagwagon who remind me of Pennywise who remind me of Strung Out. So if you like any of those bands, or you like the Cleveland Indians, or you live in Europe, then chances are you'll find *Together For the First Time* to be a grand slam! I considered it more of a groundout to the shortstop, in case you were wonderin'. JB

**The Q and Not U "On Play Patterns" (Discord) EP-** So I let one of my friends borrow this before I actually listened to it because at the time I was really busy and thought, "hey, instead of it sitting on my shelf, why not let someone enjoy two new songs from the band taking the D.C. sound into the next millennium?" Then, a few weeks later, when I tried to get it back from him (and after he told me how the two songs were the best thing he'd ever heard and how he couldn't stop listening to it) this "friend" told me he lost it. But he burned me a copy. Unfortunately, when I went to put this in the CD player just now, the CD just busted in half; and even if I taped it together, I really don't think it would work. From examining the jacket, it appears that there are only three members in the band now and they really like to wear black. But that doesn't really tell you, the reader, too much about the music, I guess. The only thing I can say about that is the Q and Not U have gotten better with each successive release and since this on Discord it'll probably only cost two or three bucks. So even though my copies of the record are lost and busted in half, I still recommend picking this up. Just don't let anyone borrow it until you've made multiple copies. At least four. JB

**The Queers "Live in West Hollywood" (Hopeless)-** One thing that can be said about the Queers is that if you buy this, you know exactly what you're getting. And even though I think the Queers are sophomore and generic (as I'm sure they would agree), this album was strangely listenable. With 30 songs, this functions not only as a live document but also as a greatest hits collection of sorts (if you can call any Queers song a bona fide "hit"). They blaze through crowd favorites like "Fuck you," "I want cunt," and "I like Young Girls," with so much precision that you almost forget how awful the lyrics are. The Queers have boiled three-chord pop-punk down to a science and I'll give 'em that; but when they sing, "I'd rather be at home, listening to the Ramones," in the song "Granola Head," I tend to agree. JB

**Quixote "Protests of the Week" (Makoto Recordings)-** For my money, this sort of angular punk/hardcore never really sits well with me. It never settles into a groove, it just keeps shifting from one idea to another, which always makes me feel uncomfortable. I'm not saying one should spend hours on one motif or musical idea (unless you are La

Monte Young), I just would like something in a song I could grab onto and hold with me. This doesn't have it. In the band's favor, though, this does sound great, with the guitar really taking the fore on the album, going from crunchy to thin and back again. If you have Slint or Fugazi posters on yr wall or their CDs in yr collection, this might be up yr alley, you little post-rock/post-punk fan you... JM

**Reach The Sky "Friends, Lies and the End of The World" (Victory)** The previous album by this Boston act was pretty decent, and this one promises to be more of the same- clear vocals and moderately catchy hardcore. Actually, this sort of makes me think of the direction that Ignite has been heading in. That is, a more mature, slightly mellowed out post-hardcore sound that retains the guitars and drums of hardcore but focuses on a more emoish (a real lack of a better term, sadly) sound. Approach if you're ready. dup

**Remembering Never "Suffocates My Words To You" (One Day Savior)-** I always know when I'm not into something when I feel like it lasts too long. You know, those times when you fidget through movies, lectures, performance art, and records? Like this one for example. It just takes too much energy to really get inside what in tarnation they are trying to convey. I was intrigued because it sounded like a hardcore effort at first, then there were bits of nu-metal that made me think, "Oh god no!" This hybrid was chalk full of repetitious uninventive guitar riffage, double-kicks, and the rawl-grawl-snarl of vocals imitating a comic villain's screechy creepy evil voice. Perhaps a taste of an energetic live show would bring some light to this. One thing struck me as interesting: the fade out at the end of their song, "Minutes Are Now Hours." An apt title to go with my opening statement, I guess I may be just used to the chop of tightly driven songs or the usual long-winded scream to end a song in this genre. By track 5, "Words" they break into a pop punk celebration which made me look at the liner notes one more time while thinking, "Is this a split CD? Did I miss something?" To reassure me, it falls back into the same ol' screamy hurried music they were playing before. The lyrical content contains the usual emotion of regret, pain, overcoming, and self-righteousness which come with growing older. If you have the patience and energy for heavy driving hurdles of independent nu metal, give this a listen; If not, keep walking. No, run. Run far far away. CT

**The Reputation (Initial)-** Elizabeth Elmore, the brash and highly feminine singer and lead guitarist of the Reputation has been writing shining pop songs for years with her previous band, Sarge, though few in the indie world noticed. Elmore's lyrics are as witty when committed to tape as her conversational style is when standing right next to her. Each line of every story in a song by Elmore is delivered urgently and thoughtfully in a way that lulls you to sleep before you realize you're being punched in the face. Fortunately for Elmore, the world may yet witness her talent for shooting from the hip amidst beautifully crafted pop songs. Unfortunately for many, Elmore's songs can't be fully understood until one witnesses them in a live setting. Until you see Elmore strut her stuff on stage, the songs will no doubt seem merely like candy coated pop-rock

songs about sex, cigarettes, and lost love. However, once all the parts are put together and one gives Elmore a sufficient chance to demonstrate her charisma and charm surrender is imminent. This is a great record. RS

**Ringworm "Birth is Pain" (Victory)-** Attention Dwid of Integrity: it's a pretty sad state when your ex-bandmates create a band that's better than what the original act has evolved into. The new Worm record is closest we're going to get to a new Integrity recording that is listenable from beginning to end. Actually, Ringworm has been around for a while and is sort of legendary around Cleveland; but their brand of metallic hardcore never really made it outside of the city until they recently reunited and recorded their blistering full-length, *Birth is Pain*. Made up of Integ alumni including guitarist Frank "3 Gun" Novinec, drummer Chris Dora, as well as vocalist the Human Furnace (you might remember him as the guest vocalist on the Integrity's track "Hollow"), the album sounds like it was written during Integrity's *Humanity is the Devil* sessions. The music is completely relentless: double bass blast beats, riot-inducing breakdowns, guitars thicker than molten lava, and vocals that actually sound like a human furnace if you can imagine that. "But Jonah, there's a million bands that could fit that description, on this label alone." That's probably what you're thinking, right? Well, you're wrong. Ringworm also have the technical virtuosity to supplement their bone-crushing tunage with blazing guitar solos and unmistakably "Clevo Style" power chord crunch which is nearly impossible to replicate. *Birth is Pain* as a model for how metal and hardcore can cross paths without sounding like Papa Roach and band makes me nostalgic for sweaty mosh pits...and I never really liked 'em in the first place. JB

**River City High "Won't Turn Down" (Big Wheel Recreation/Doghouse)-** I'm generally into the stuff that these two labels put out, which makes it sad for me to say that this is easily the worst album I have heard all year and an early nominee for the worst album of the decade. I had heard that this album was bad and had my suspicions from the really bad promo photos of the band, but nothing could have prepared me for just how bad this record is. River City High play pop-punk under the guise of a stadium rock band. The lyrics are so bad and so cheesy, the music is so boring, and the rock star posturing is just plain bullshit. The folks at Suburban Home had a "We hate River City High" page in their last zine/catalog and I could not agree more. Everything about this band makes me feel very violent. The saddest thing about this band is that they feature members of Inquisition and Funsize who were two bands I really enjoyed. This "super group" is anything but super and in fact, it is quite the opposite. Why two labels (Big Wheel and Doghouse) sat down and decided that putting out this album was a good idea is beyond me. It is with this kind of "Genius" that movies like Con Air and Blair Witch 2 make it onto the big screen. The one good thing about an album like this is it really makes you appreciate good music. NT

**The Rocking Horse Winner "Horizon" (Equal Vision)-** First off, this band gets props for naming themselves after an excellent short story by D.H. Lawrence; if you haven't read it, I suggest it. Like their ancient label-mates Project K, the Rocking Horse Winner don't actually really rock very hard. The band features Jolie Lindholm who's done some work with Dashboard Confessional (key selling point, right?) and while I try not to compare indie bands with female vocalists strictly with each other, I'm going to do it anyway. The best description of this I can come up for TRHW is Sarge without the fire. The songs are well-recorded and everyone in the band are competent enough musicians, but it just seems that this is completely lacking in feeling, which is fairly ironic since this stuff is probably marketed as 'emo.' There are moments where everything clicks - like the falsetto vocal harmony juxtaposed with sparse piano lines during "Tomorrow" - but for the most part this felt like background music for shopping at Urban Outfitters. JB

**Rye Coalition "On Top" (Tiger Style)-** Forget about the brash, fuck-you guitar wizardry found here. Ignore the drums which would make Keith Moon sweat, or the bass lines that you can feel in your groin. And pay no mind to the vocals that urge fathers to hide their daughters pretty darn quick. What really interests me about New Jersey's favorite Italian boozers' newest opus is the fact that they have been playing the same type of balls-to-the-wall, attitude-up-your-ass '70s influenced rawk for almost 8 years now. While bands like the Explosion or Sloan or the Anniversary or countless other wannabes attempt the same type of gutsy and raw expressionism, they pull it off about as well as a cocker-spaniel trying to imitate a pitbull. After hearing a Rye Coalition record from start to finish one gets the impression that those other "rockers" don the rock and roll mantle for their next big gig and then revert back to their sorry amiable state after the curtain has come down. For Rye Coalition, the attitude is completely genuine. So much so that songs like "Freshly Frankness" inspire the true bad boys of the world in a way those copycats just never will understand. In other words, try all you want Damn Personals or Moods for Moderns, you will never ever be as catchy or as belligerent as the great Rye Coalition. The reason? Well, according to a recent interview I did with the boys, the answer is that they were born with it, or born into it maybe. And is the music fun and catchy to match the supreme chaos displayed here? Hell yeah it is! So much so that when you see this band live you can't help but throw yourself all over the dance floor armed with a Bud and a pack of Camels. This band is awesome but I fear that all those posers trying so hard to pull off that kitschy mesh John Deer cap or newly laundered Black Sabbath shirt will be far more successful. In this business image sells far more than attitude, and that may be Rye Coalition's kiss of death. RS

# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: RS | Jonah Bayer: JB | Jason Murphy: JM | du prosporio: dup | Adam Parks: AP |

Jonah Brucker-Cohen: JBC | Tyler Bussey: TB | Celeste Tabora: CT | Nick Twisp: NT

17

**"Everyone Is A Target"** (Liberation Records)- The title of this record is very fitting, because from a lyrical standpoint, this band has their fingers pointing at many people, themselves included. Furthermore, the vocals are in the forefront, demanding your attention, with the guitar's power varying throughout the disc and the bass and drums usually off in their own world, only occasionally dominating the overall sound. This is pretty solid pop-punk, although not very original, with few stylistic variations; for example, there's shouting in the second track that almost shows a youth-crew influence, and the final "hidden" track, called "Death To False Love Songs", is a funny mockery of screamo/hardcore with lame lyrics, such as "You're my kitten, yeah, I'm smitten, I must be dreaming, pinch me!" Aside from that, the lyrics are actually pretty good. They're introspective and self-critical, while dealing with leaving home, regret, friends lost and bitter tastes left over from problematic relationships, and the music is above and beyond what most bands like this do. Next time I try to convince a hardcore kid that pop punk isn't all that bad, I might use this as an example. TB

**Schatzi "Death of the Alphabet"** (Mammoth) EP- Ed Rose must have some serious psychological problems. I mean, when he got out of recording school he was probably pretty excited about his future as a record producer. He probably decided he didn't want to work for 'the man', "Hey, why not open my own studio?" he probably asked himself. He probably took out a loan, borrowed money from his relatives, and moved to Kansas City to live out the American Dream. Upon arriving in KC he probably established himself recording local punk acts like The Get Up Kids, The Anniversary, and Ultimate Fakebook. He was probably making good money, but then all the clones started coming in and making generic emo records and forcing him to record them. The rents went up and he had to keep working,

no matter how sick he was of hearing about stars or holding hands or broken hearts. He probably started coming home from work unfulfilled, wondering what he was doing with his life and when this rash of bands would stop tormenting him. "What have I done to deserve this?" he would cry out in his living room strewn with empty wine bottles and pizza boxes. "Why did they choose me?" I don't know Ed, why don't you ask Schatzi yourself? JB

**Scissorfight "Mantrapping for Sport and Profit"** (Tortuga)- I've seen this band in a bunch of bigger metal magazines as of late and heaven only

knows why they're getting so much mainstream attention. Scissorfight remind me of a would-be soundtrack to *Deliverance* (especially the male-rape scene) or *Joe Dirt*—if you've seen either of those gems—in a Butthole Surfers meets Jesus Lizard kind of way. In other words, New Hampshire's strangest rock and roll band have served up a healthy serving of thick, crude, hick-core full of dropped-D tunings, redneck ramblings, and the misguided notion that the entire state of New Hampshire is just about as rough as a backwoods Alabama roadhouse. This record was interesting for a few spins, and I could see someone playing this at a barbecue full of dudes with kitschy confederate hats on. I, however, like to cook with females and I doubt most of my lady-friends would appreciate this in the least. RS

**The Seconds "Y"** (5RC) Hailing from Olympia, Washington, the Seconds play a disjointed brand of punk rock that is refreshingly pure in its aesthetic. Each instrument has a distinct role in the band's infectious musical melee and while the guitar frequently veers from the typical chord/melody role and scratches and crawls its way up the fretboard, the drums also tend to avoid the straight 4/4 rock beat in favor of disjointed syncopation. And, oh yeah, this shit is sexy. The male/female vocals duel each other like they are engaged in the act, and the frantic nature of the music parallels the orgasmic build-ups and breakdowns. It all climaxes (literally), in exalting screams at the end of the final track, the aptly titled, "Baby make that sound." If I were a smoker, I'd light one up right now. JB

**Selby Tigers "The Curse Of The Selby Tigers"** (Hopeless)- Perhaps it's not the curse of the Selby Tigers, but the curse of a band's life span. Just when the band was picking up popularity-momentum, they call it quits. They were one of the more entertaining and fun bands to witness too, so it's a shame. But hey kids, better late than never right? You can pick up this disc that sounds punk like the Dead Kennedys were, but without political statements—more like stories of high school high-jinx—like "Cheerleading is Big Business" or "Punch Me In The Face (With Your Lips)." With husband-and-wife Nathan and Arzu exchanging yelps and guitar duties, the enigmatic Sammy G on bass and punchy drummer Dave—they've successfully put their energetic live show elements onto record. Great for when you are feeling like you need a summer day! CT

**Seville "Waiting In Seville"** (Fiddler Records) EP- Past and present members of Dashboard Confessional's rhythm section present us with this 6 song EP. You probably have an idea of how these guys sound by keeping such company, but lucky for us, these songs are not acoustic emo ballads. Here you have a band that rocks really well played indie rock. There are way too many bands playing this type of rock, but let me tell you, Seville pull it off. These guys are as good or better than any of the bands on Vagrant Records who seem to be all the rage with the kids these days. And guess what kids? The songs are not whiny or cheesy which is a big plus in my book. A great EP. I can't wait to hear more from these folks. NT

**Sharks Keep Moving "Pause And Clause"** (Status) CDep- Initially what caught my ear

was the sophisticated drum stylings that seem to be jazz-inspired - although it's sound apparently has its roots in good ol' rock n' roll. Above those drums was the rubber-like sound of the bass, obediently following the drum's path. The music slightly resembles Southern Records' kings of the slow-and-steady rock rage, Karate, because of the music's procrastinating feel yet complex nature, most evident in the vocal arrangements. This is SKM's latest release since their self-titled record in 1999. Shortly after that release they "broke up" - making us think we'd never hear from them again. But, in late 2000, they gave us (and their label Status) a surprise encore which led to this three song EP which seems to pick up right where they left off. Though three songs seems hardly enough from such an excellent and promising band, let's hope that in this case, sharks really do keep moving! CT

**Shiner, "The Egg"** (Desoto)- Here is a bold statement for you: Shiner is the most underrated band in indie rock right now. Sadly, it is with good reason. No, it's not because their singer has a voice that is harsh to the ears (he doesn't, his voice is like cashmere), or because their guitars are played ineptly and jaggedly (actually, I challenge you to find two guitarists with better rhythm than these two), or because their rhythm section can't quite hold their own (I dare you to tap your hand along with the snare drum or the bass line on most of these songs—good fucking luck). Instead, Shiner are simply too talented for their own good. They play in time signatures that one can't really bob their head to with ease, there are no super-catchy choruses, and, well, the music is just a bit too complex as far as song arrangement goes. Because of these maladies, I fear Shiner will never garner the same acclaim kindred spirits like Jawbox did. Do I care? Hell no! I'm just glad one band has the talent and the will to make such soothing, beautiful, and driving music—even if their checkbooks might suffer because of it. This is a wonderful record as is all of their horribly underrated stuff. RS

**Skating Club (Lowly/Wishing Tree)** New England locals pepper this disc (engineer Bruce MacFarlane, indie everyman Colin Rhinesmith, Sean O'Brien of Come, and Brian Dunn), which is an unclear project with Aubrey Anderson seemingly at the helm. Before I even get a chance to decide, the "Slowcore" decal is slapped onto this record. As a suffix, "Core" really doesn't do much but irritate me, but this stuff is definitely slow. Mellow, mournful and somberly paced—these adjectives come as easily as the languid strains of this recording. Very natural, breathy male vocals levitate over the telltale hauntings of a heavy Americana influence. This is not an unusual sound for the Boston area, and in a stack of punk records, it's like a blast of mouthwash. This is rainy day music for some, and essential roots for others. Nice. dup

**Slick Shoes (Tooth and Nail)** – Slick shoes made this record look really old. There's all these scratches and hydrochloric acid stains on the layout that makes it look like it was buried in a backyard and just excavated with some arrowheads or something. Equally as

clever, the CD looks like vinyl. Remember vinyl? So even though the music is recorded on compact disc you think, "Hey, this looks really old." Smart, right? However, once you listen to the music you realize that this can't be that old because the proliferation of generic emo/punk bands only started this decade, not during prehistoric times. All I am going to do is quote one of Slick Shoes' choruses and you should get a decent idea of how painful this was to listen to: "Friday Night/ Let's go/ Let's all have some fun tonight/ All right/ Here we go/ Here we go tonight." This is either a bad archaeological joke or these guys listen to MXPX way too much. Either way save your cash, suckas. JB

**Slight Return "You Are Not Our Demographic"** (Matlock)- Slight Return is from Canada (to their credit) but they have a kind of Swedish sound, not unlike bands such as Starmarket and Kevlar. This record has seemingly good intentions, but the final product is a wishy-washy, uninspired collection of pseudo-pop emotional indie-rock songs. Everything about the recording is weak, including the vocals and the drums, which is the big difference between Slight Return and their actually-Swedish counterparts. Getting over the shoddy recording, the songwriting itself is catchy, but not overly poppy and there are some tricky off-time parts that lend a little interest, but the vocal melodies are often unsure and contrary to the underlying music, leaving the entire composition a little feeble. AP

**Small Engine Metropolis "The Cynic"** (Immigrant Sun)- Some pretty unusual guitar lines open up this record, from this Western NY-cum-Brooklyn hardcore label. The sound is total chugging mid-tempo street punk with searing lead guitar, four on the floor drumming and that overall anthem feel- a plus I'd say. However, the vocals are more Hot Water Music than Dropkick Murphys. A kind of throaty warble rolls its way gingerly through these songs, finding melody then succumbing to a moderate hoarseness. Considering the huge range of vocals that latter-day punk and 'emo' has exposed, this is pretty good- the dynamics of the vocals go a long way to prove the strength of the songwriting. There's a bit of a tradeoff in quality where the music carries the parts where the vocalists rasp is out of the ballfield, but it feels like a surmountable obstacle. Emotional stuff over very good playing. No real standouts, but there's talent here which makes this a worthy listen. dup

**Sparta "Austere"** (Dreamworks) EP- Since the ex-member tag is so heavily used to promote bands in the punk and hardcore scenes (and the reason some bands actually get signed, see: AM/FM), it's hard not to equate new projects with the musicians previous successes; especially when you're new band sounds very similar. However, when your old band was At The Drive-In - probably one of the most important bands in the last ten years - it's nearly impossible to ignore the past. On the surface, Sparta's similarities are undeniable. The opening riff to "Cataract" is nearly

identically to "Invalid Litter Department," and Jim Ward's vocals sound eerily similar to Cedric Bixler when he's not screaming. But once you dig

beneath the vast layers of this four songs (thanks to that major label recording budget), it's evident that *Austere* ain't ATDI B-Sides. Electronic flourishes via drum machines and random bleeps add depth to the fairly straight forward post (insert genre here) songs, while one of the most tasteful rhythm sections since Hot Water Music do more than hold the songs together - they define them. Sparta may never have the mainstream momentum of ATDI, but they're continuing their battle against mediocrity on the airwaves. Let's just hope the American public is ready to listen. JB

**The Starting Line "With Hopes of Starting Over..." (Drive-Thru) EP-** From now on I think that LOI only do one Drive-Thru Records review per issue, since every band on this label sounds exactly the same. I'll admit, I sort of liked the first New Found Glory record (which technically doesn't even count as a Drive-Thru release since it was originally put out on Eulogy Records), but The Starting Line is like a bad parody of NFG, who have almost become a parody of themselves, if you ask me. I remember when bands like Lifetime used to sing about teenage melancholy, but their music still had at least a semblance of originality and vigor. For example, Ari would never, ever, write something like, "Getting over a three leaf clover, that I thought was a four." Even at an emo show, I thought you could get your ass kicked for saying shit like that! Listen guys, I can relate to getting pissed on by girls, really, but this music is formulaic to the point of nausea: bouncy drum beats, palm-muted power chords, and occasionally a 'breakdown' to make all the kids jump up and down with glee as deep as it gets here. Add the staple whiny vocals with occasional distortion or chorus added to 'em and you've got...What's the point? You've heard it all before. It doesn't matter whether it's The Starting Line, or Allister, or The Benjamins - this needs to stop. Now, I decided I'm not going to mention The Starting Line's cover of "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now," from the *Manican Soundtrack*. JB

**Stay Gold "Caught Up In The Moment" (Indecision)** Six tracks of classic-styled pos-youth hardcore. This is fast and aggressive, with some good melodic riffs via that all-important second guitar. The vocals are somewhat generic, but the end product remains pretty good. For a label with wavering levels of quality in their releases, this is a positive. Nothing wild or ear-bending, but a respectable addition to a modern straight edge record collection. dup

**St Electrelane "Rock It To The Moon" (Mr. Lady)**- Electrelane delves into the past when organ-heavy music was abundant. It can be too much to take at times, but overall this mostly-instrumental effort projects feelings of fun without being too aloof and dedication to the music without being too serious. You'll hear a dog barking in the distance, a tiny almost inaudible robotic voice and child-like giggling throughout the disc. The band seems to strive to be inventive and weird in

the sort of "Let's worship Frank Zappa" way. One complaint: the organ can get annoying as the sound can't help but drown out the rest of the instruments, at the same time the organ is what gives Electrelane their signature sound. It's a double-edged sword. Regardless of how many times it's been done before, Electrelane does okay for themselves. CT

**Son of Sam "Songs from the Earth" (Nitro)**- This is a supergroup featuring Davey from AFI on vocals and members of Danzig, Samhain, and Tiger Army playing rhythm. You even get guest vocals by Glenn Danzig. This sounds a lot like the direction AFI are going these days which isn't a bad thing. Think Samhain or Danzig with Davey on lead vocals. If you are or ever were a fan of any of the previously mentioned bands, you will enjoy this record. NT

**Strike Anywhere "Change Is A Sound" (Jade Tree)**- Punk rock and radical politics go hand-in-hand, perhaps now more than ever. Strike Anywhere's debut full-length clearly demonstrates this. Even the album cover proudly displays their anti-fascist stance. The band manages to convey their message, however, in a way that isn't stale, using the passion of vocalist Thomas and an adrenaline-packed hardcore punch to give the lyrics their power. The lyrics themselves cover a variety of topics, and point fingers at a number of people - lines like "When they broke down the door and put their guns in the face of your wife and child, and as they pinned you to the floor did you say, 'Officer, I am not resisting you?'" stand out, in particular. And, thanks to Thomas, they are delivered with the kind of honesty, anger, and urgency that can send chills down your spine. Politics aside, Strike Anywhere's music is in the D.C./Richmond hardcore vein, but sounds strangely fresh. This is due to their approach, one that is filled with excitement and love for playing music. Fortunately, the reaction this record sparks in the listener is a parallel to the way the songs are played - it can make you feel energized, moved, and intensified, all with a fist in the air in defiance to the status quo. Get this. TB

**Sugarcult "Start Static" (Ultimatum/Artemis)**- You know that feeling you get when you've been in the mall too long? It moves quickly into your lower gut and it lets you know that right then and there, it is time to get the sweet heck out of the mall. That feeling overcame me during track four of this CD, and I skipped half of tracks two and three. That's how I can be so certain that "Start Static" is way too pop. When it started I thought "Dookie", which isn't too bad, you know, a shiny pop-punk sort of ordeal. Then I was like "Eh, maybe more like Urge Overkill", which is pretty damn pop. You definitely have to have some kind of tolerance or specific mood to get into that sound. So that was pushing it. Then it hit me: The Julianna Theory. When anything reminds me of that band, I have an alarming psychological and physical reaction. Immediately I was overcome by the none-too-familiar-yet-readily-recognizable symptoms of "mall sickness" and I had to remove the CD. So I can only tell you about track one and the first half of tracks two, three and four. But I think I've said enough already. AP

**Sunset Valley "Icepond" (Barsuk)**- Not until track #9 does Sunset Valley provide a really

catchy tune. The vocal structure reminds me of that 80s song "We Didn't Start The Fire," by Billy Joel, in its staccato way. The other stand out track, "Parade On My Rain" reminded me of Matt Sharp's The Rentals or Cake. "Parade..." is such a happy tune about not wanting to be cheered up and wanting to stay dour. I love the irony so much, I hit the repeat button four times! A blend of The Cars and early REM bleed through the rest of the album. Those comparison-thoughts led me to conclude that this band lacks in originality, however easy to listen to. Their strength lies not in their musicality, but in the vocal interplay and harmonies. However, I'm watching out for this band, because hey - they're not half bad. CT

**SuperChinchillaRescueMission (Attention Deficit Disorder) EP**- Unaudible vocals, muddy guitars and bass, indulgent fast drum fills... it can't be anything but late 90's style punk rock. Somewhere within these four songs you can tell someone is trying to tell you something they feel is earnest. (You might as well read the lyrics in the disc instead of beating yourself up listen for them.) If you must, try "Bottled Mind on the Backside" because it owns the most structure and you can actually get a little taste of the bass and you get treated to a pretty breakdown before it kicks back in, of course. Within the typical 4/4 pop-punk drumming there are repetitive fills that don't really add flavor to the song but distract from what could be a straightforward punk ditty. Spit-singing and poorly mixed tracks make for an overall sloppy effort. Chances are you'll find better ways of feeding your guilty pleasure for pop-punk elsewhere. CT

**SuperChinchillaRescueMission / The Tim Version "Go Halves on a Bastard" (ADD)**- I just bought a bike. Now, I don't have tons of money but I really wanted a good looking, good driving bike that I wouldn't be embarrassed to show off to my friends. So I did some shopping around and eventually bought a very nice bike that looks a bit more flashy than it actually is. The fact that it's so good looking probably isn't the best idea in New York City, but I did get a very good deal on the bike so even if it gets stolen, well, at least I didn't pay as much as I could have. However, one reason it was so cheap is because instead of being made out of aluminum like most mid-level bikes are these days, my bike is made out of the more durable, yet far heavier alloy of steel. It's weight really isn't that big a deal except when carrying the bike down stairs or something, but some nights when I ride over to the upper-west side to get a very late night snack at an all-night diner up there I can feel that I'm pushing my bike a bit more than I would if it were lighter. It's cool, though, 'cause I generally listen to music when I ride - again, another bad idea in New York City - and last night I was listening to this CD. Both bands sound like faster Hot Water Music, which isn't surprising since a) the members of these bands have all at one time or another spent time on No Idea where HWM got their start; b) all the bands are from Florida; and, c) most bands with thick power chords and gruff vocals more closely resemble Hot Water Music than Green Day. I will probably never listen to this again, but on my bikeride through the deserted streets of New York bordering on central park, this was exactly what I wanted to listen to. Maybe you would too. RS

**Tabula Rasa (One Day Savior)**- To be perfectly truthful I only listened to this CD two or

three times before reviewing it which is rare for me - I generally listen to each record I review three times as much before putting my thoughts to paper. But, after a few listens it is clear that there is very little subtlety to this music. That's not to say that Tabula Rasa are bad 'cause they're not. They are actually quite interesting. However, their sound - a clusterfuck of guitar noise, chaotic drums, and soaring vocals - leave you with nothing to sink your teeth into. No hooks, no reoccurring parts, nothing that differentiates one song from the next. I'm sure this band is cool live, but on record I can't think of a time when I would ever have the urge to throw on Tabula Rasa in my room as it seems to be a bit too skatterbrained. With a bit more musical maturity and a lot more focus this band could be one to watch. Right now, however, they bite the style of bands like Garden Variety and the Grey AM too much for my liking. RS

**Taking Back Sunday "Tell All Your Friends" (Victory)**- I just came up with an interesting perspective. One might say that Victory's artists never grow up, their music never matures. Maybe that's why no one cared about the Strife, Integrity, or Bloodlet reunions - because those bands never quite made it out of 1995. That might be the reason Victory is what it is today: formulas sell and they sell damn well, even if you've got to focus support on new, exciting artists instead of tried and true acts like Earth Crisis. The reason I bring that up is because musically a band like Taking Back Sunday have some very interesting ideas. They're really not doing anything different from the rest of their Long Island ilk (and Neil Rubenstein of This Year's Model/Sons of Abraham even makes a cameo here which reinforces my notion that he has one of the best voices ever to grace a hardcore stage), and they might even be biting The Glassjaw/Brand New style way too much for either of those two bands to sleep well at night, but they definitely bring an energy and excitement to the music that hasn't been seen since the Movielife were first getting started. Taking Back Sunday are appropriate for an attitude like the Victory A&R department clearly wears on their sleeves as of late since they are very very immature song-writers, they make a lot of oft-timed mistakes in this recording, and they have yet to truly find a unique voice. On another label where they may be given a bit more nurturing before they find exactly what it is they want to say and how they want to say it, I would say that big things could be expected from Taking Back Sunday. But for now, looking at what their label does with its stars of yesteryear and what type of bands they are signing these days, I'd guess they're just going to get lost in the shuffle. RS

There Were Wires

# Death by Stereo

The LOI Review Staff is: Ross Siegel: RS | Jonah Bayer: JB | Jason Murphy: JM | du prospicio: dup | Adam Parks: AP |

Jonah Brucker-Cohen: JBC | Tyler Bussey: TB | Celeste Tabora: CT | Nick Twisp: NT

19

**(Modern Day Detachment)**- Good points: I like the stark black and gray packaging (nice cardboard wallet). The stories mixed in with the lyrics is a nice change of pace. I'll bet no one in this bad is guilty of matricide. Bad points: UGH, the music is SO predictable, it's painful. "Let's put a ballad part here, a breakdown here, some screaming here, and a wanky guitar solo here." "What if we moved the breakdown to over here?" "Are you kidding? It has to go over to the quiet part, or how are people going to feel the dynamic change?" In all fairness, this is not the bottom of the barrel, it's actually probably in the middle of the class, and I'm just a bitter old man (I turned 25 the other day, DAMN). I wouldn't trust my opinion on this, either. JM

**This Computer Kills (Substandard)**- Perhaps borrowing inspiration for their name from Woodie Guthrie's infamous guitar inscription, "This Machine Kills Fascists", This Computer Kills offers thirteen tracks of screamy, energy-expensive punk rock that occasionally relent to eerie instrumental jams. The album has a pretty continuous feel, sticking to the sound set out in the opening track, yet the songs are easily distinguishable from one another as individual pieces (except in one instance where, in what is perhaps a poorly understood artistic move, tracks four and six are actually the same song). The production is decent, minus a couple outstanding flaws, like the fact that the drummer doesn't have a real kick drum, so he uses a cardboard box. Also the lyrics are kind of stupid most of the time. Some people can listen to a band with dumb lyrics as long as the music is good. I know at least two people who are like that. If you are like that, then maybe you could enjoy this. AP

**Thrice "The Illusion of Safety" (Sub City)**- To be candid, I think that the sounds bands like the Movielife, Glasseater, Thrice, and others aspire to is pretty much exactly the same. Ambitiously, they all try to mix pop hooks, punk urgency, and hardcore

catharsis into a seamless conglomeration on each track they put forth. Previously, I hadn't heard any of them do it to a completely satisfactory level-they all sounded forced and contrived since none of them realized they were ripping off every skate-punk band from the last 10 years. Shameless... boring. That was, until I heard this CD-which is fucking awesome. Every song on this record is the amalgamation of heavy and hooks so many bands aspire to, but in this case it is done so well that it is hard to deny that Thrice are worth the endless hype they have received of late. Every song is catchy, poignant, and filled with enough screamy angst to

make even the most content 16 year-old realize that life ain't what it should be. Plus, the level of musicianship-from the flawless bass/guitar interplay, to the rock-steady drumming, to the guitar work that borders on brilliant-is far and away the best out of all the bands attempting this style, which seems to be really hip right now. Needless to say, Thrice have surpassed my expectations and the boundaries seemingly laid before them by the past decade of hardcore and written a record that is, in a word, incredible. RS

**The Tie That Binds "Half Past Heroes" (Arms Reach)**- As far as I can tell, this is the same Texas band that released their first album on OneFoot back in '96 or '97 and originally went by the name Badger. Their first album still gets airing out once in a while, as it's got some great Jawbreakerish melodicore/emo songs. Energetic enough to satisfy the punk guitar cravings and still issuing forth a kind of tense (for lack of a better term) indie-rock vocal sentiment. This, it would seem, is their second effort and it instantly sounds a bit more refined in the arrangements and vocals. Perhaps it's just better produced? The soaring parts still balanced out by the slow "introspective" bits and they switch on and off dramatically. It's like the classic horror movie reflex, you know what's gonna happen but still hold your breath waiting for it to drop. A notable success. Fans of Knap-sack or Samiam should look into this. dup

**Time Spent Driving "Walls Between Us" (Sessions) EP**- I think I'm gonna surf the wave of nostalgia in ten years and start a 90's-style emo/punk act called The Sentence Fragments. We'll be like Crucial Youth and clown everyone, yeah! Anyhow, despite the pretentious title, Time Spent Driving provides pretty pretentious music. Well, perhaps that's just a sentence I couldn't resist. But this just won't please everyone, as it's heavy-handed emo-style stuff with the token on-again/off-again rock drone behind labored vocals. Not badly played, and certainly not awfully written but it's a bit druggy. The lyrics are kind of hard to take seriously but hell, it doesn't sound too bad, especially if you like the moodier stuff. Approach with caution, and expect syrup. dup

**Time Spent Driving "Just Enough Bright" (Sessions)**- Santa Cruz, CA has an emo band. The 16 year old skaters there love them, while I imagine the Fury 66 and Good Riddance guys aren't that into them. They try to sound like Jimmy Eat World's Clarity era. They're not nearly as good at their instruments and their songs are boring. Do I sound like I lack passion in writing this review? Guess why: emo sucks. RS

**Transchamps "Double Exposure" (Thrill Jockey) EP**- When I first heard about this project, it seemed too good (and weird) to be true. Neo-classical metalheads, The Fucking Champs, were planning on releasing two collaborative EPs with the vocoder-friendly Trans Am, and following the records up with a tour. Double Exposure is the first of the EPs, and unfortunately, it's a whopping disappointment. The record basically sounds like the Fucking Champs with keyboards, and neglects to explore the sonic realms that Trans Am has pioneered throughout their equally illustrious

career. Only the second track, "Big Machine," with its Reznorian drumbeat and electronic flourishes, actually reminded me that Trans Am had bothered to show up. The rest of the album displays the same flashy solos, double-tracked harmonies, and power-chord crunch that we've come to love from the Champs, but not much else. A solid EP, but I'm hoping that the next one will recognize the full potential of this mind-blowing conglomeration. JB

**The Trouble With Sweeney "Dear Life" (Burnt Toast)**- Not only do I love this CD, I love so many things about this CD. I love that its cover photo takes inspiration from my favorite collection of short stories ever, *Revenge of the Lawn*, by the late great Richard Brautigan. I love that instead of the typical insert fanfare there are David Foster Wallace-esque mock-bio liner notes. But, the fact that I like the insert doesn't mean I don't love the lyrics too. Especially lines like, "A denim jacket/ I haven't worn since March/ There's a note in the pocket/ meet me at the arch street bar/ where we used to meet/ not the one everybody goes to/ the one across the street." I think that's really great. I love the way the music combines early Wilco alt-country twang and tortured Bright Eyes introspection without being overly derivative of either. I love that the guitar solo on the "So Tough" is more expressive than words almost ever are. In fact, I want to take this song and put it on a mix CD and give it to ever girl whose ever fucked me over or actually one in particular. But I'll do that later... maybe tomorrow. Right now, I just want to listen to this record on headphones, again and again and again, and go to bed knowing that there is still hope for rock music. Goodnight. JB

**This Radiant Boy "Proud to be a Chemist" (Ides of March)**- Proud to be a chemist, yes; But are they proud to be musicians or songsmiths? I'm putting this question out there because I can't decipher to myself if this band is joking—or if they really are earnest about their 311-snare, Alice In Chains breakdown, Weezer-esque formulation, mixed with pop punk overall sound. (Somethings just don't go well, like flies in your soup and well, a lot of pop and punk.) I've listened to this disc a few times over to find some hidden magic or perhaps some charming qualities, and just like the conclusion of an undesirable friendship, I've ended up with nothing. CT

**Ultimate Fakebook "Open Up and Say Awesome" (Initial)**- This is a true college rock band. Explosive beginnings to every song seem to exclaim "These songs are explosive! At least in the beginning!" Never really taking unexpected turns, yet darting between parts, the first few tracks can grab your attention, but as the disc plays out, it becomes fairly predictable. There's great rhythm and solidarity between guitar, drums and bass, great vocals with oft clever lyrics and an overall pop appeal. Feeling like I knew the formula for an album like "Open Up and Say Awesome", I spent the first half of the album just waiting, dreading the token slow song. It came and went, nothing too disappointing or exciting. Now I am realizing that every song just sort of came and went. I don't remember any of them. Instead, I am remem-

bering when I used to work at Subway and we had to listen to the local upstate New York radio station's "original modern rock" show. I can't really respect a CD that takes me back to those times. But I can respect a sandwich that combines pepperoni, salami, ham and bologna all on one roll. AP

**Until the End "Blood in the Ink" (Eulogy)**- Resolved: 1) The words "here" and "seat" do not rhyme. They don't even slant rhyme, and they probably never will. 2) In these modern times, two parts is not enough for a whole song. 3) While meaningless violence is still considered to be very chic, it is definitely on its way out this season, and those at the forefront of hardcore fashion have already forgone it for other, more cutting-edge motifs. 4) Shitty hardcore bands have rendered the following useless as metaphors: Blood, ink, hearts, veins, wrists, throats, angels, rope, blades of any sort, fire, wings, angels, the sky, spines, eyes, the color red and angels. 5) Until the End have probably heard the word "metaphor", but most likely lack a concrete definition for it. 6) "Metaphor" also does not rhyme with "seat." AP

**John Vanderslice "Life And Death Of An American Fourtracker" (Barsuk)**- There are few labels out there that you can trust with releasing good records, but so far Barsuk has a pretty good track record. This record is really a good deal, you get 12 terrific tracks – all of which are warm and comforting. With the help of indie all-stars du jour, (members of Mates of State, Death Cab for Cutie, Beulah, and Spoon) – Mr. Vanderslice, a San Franciscan engineer-songwriter, presents us with memorably embrace-able tunes overall suggestive of Elephant 6 bands. However, arrangement-wise, "Fiend In A Cloud" points toward The Beatles, while "Nikki Oh Nikki" owns more of the clinkity-clank everyday sounds that we're used to hearing from Bjork. With three awesome releases thus far, Vanderslice seems to be one to watch out for. CT

**V/A "Membranaphonics" (Monitor Records)**- Do not adjust your stereo. Just enjoy the ride that Monitor will take you on. It's not listener friendly, per say. Music like this is selfish and personal. Featuring artists like Christina Files, Varsity, Kevin Shea, and Jeremiah Green - I don't imagine you would be inclined to popping this in while having company over for a pow-wow. I do understand how good self-indulgence feels; How it feels to sit in solitude, in your own space, on your own time, listening to this passive-aggressive driving rock record. If you feel the need to absolve yourself from social behavior, let this be your soundtrack. CT

**V/A "Punkzilla" (Nitro)**- Hey, here is a novel idea. Instead of putting out a shitty comp with 18 songs by bands that may have once been of mild interest to upwards of several dozen teenagers (songs that have already been released once, and in some cases twice), just so that people will remember that you're running a record label, why don't you put out a new good record by a new good band that

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will make your label matter to some new different teenagers? It's just an idea. AP

VIA "A Fistful Of Rock 'n' Roll Vol.

7" (Victory)- Aha, so "the new black" has been replaced by another color, and "rock and roll" comes to you from a hardcore label almost as something new. Lest you forget that this same thing was called "punk", "garage" and "pop" all at different times in history. But history is useless to the frontline of record retail and "rock 'n' roll" can be sold to the baggy Slipknot masses as something that has miraculously come back! Where has it been?! All irony and spite aside, here's 19 tracks from The Donnas and a bunch of acts like The Shut-Ups, Les Viperes, and Wonky Business. To their credit, it seems that this comp is very well researched and has great liner notes on the 70's by the compiler, Sal Canzonieri of Electric Frankenstein. Lots of good tracks in the Estrus/Crypt style, with the odd organ thrown in. The auspices here are a bit suspect, but the content is excellent and there's some great 70's style garage/punk (ahh, that feels better). Be careful, if you spend too much time pissing about the fact that Victory put this out, you might miss a great mix of this sound. dup

V For Vendetta "Beneath This Mask Another Mask" (Mr. Lady)- I'm a sucker for angular rock, you know proggy mathy shit. This Providence, RI band totally tantalizes my affinity. Add honest lyrics about interesting topics and I'm sold. These two women (Cara Hyde & Michelle Marchese) far exceed the quality and structure that those other structureless math rock bands of today provide. Some songs are gentle and feminine, almost motherly - while others are as hard hitting as your next-door neighbor's abusive relationship. Following the stop and go, go and then stop again of VforV can get a little heavy to digest, but no matter where the direction of the song takes you, it's certain that you will be entertained through the whole ride. CT

The Wage of Sin "The Product of Deceit and Loneliness" (Immigrant Sun)- Meathead, cliché band names aside, here we have what stands as the second all-female hardcore band I have encountered since my introduction to the genre. Now, I am the first person to tell you that I think women in music should be treated as musicians first and women second, but if the members of Wage of Sin think that they are going to escape the marvel and wonder that comes with an all female metalcore band, well then they're living in a dream world. The fact is, all-female bands are rare period, in any style of music. Another sad fact is that women are more often taught "lady-like" instruments like violin or piano, instead of guitar or the drums; and at the same time women that listen to agro music are often thought to be unfeminine or tom-boys. It's the sad truth, and I am more than happy to say that Wage of Sin, featuring Rachel of Most Precious Blood, are here to rip the face off stereotypes and expectations. Even with lyrics that are ridiculously forced and jejune, the guitars pummel, the drums slam - as well as anyone in hardcore I might add - and I think a lot of bassists could take a lesson from Jenn Christensen, WoS's lo-end

thrasher. Let's be perfectly honest: should one rush out to the store and purchase this record over any of the better metal records of the past 5 years? Probably not, as this is definitely heavily worn ground. However, it would be sad to see something like this project go to waste. If this is a new face of hardcore, I'm strapping on my work-gloves. RS

TW Walsh "Pollensongs" (My Pal God) EP- Floating in a sea of melancholy next to the Weakerthans is guitarist/keyboardist/downer-dude TW Walsh. Walsh is best known for his impressive collaborations with Pedro the Lion's David Bazan, but, somewhat surprisingly, his music has more in common with the Flaming Lips than the Lion. First off, Walsh's vocal timbre sounds eerily like Lips frontman, Wayne Coyne; his echo-laden vocals ebbing and bobbing alongside reverb-rich guitar and sparse instrumentation which complements the ambiguous lyricism. This EP is the perfect length; just when you're settling into the album and getting ready to go to sleep, the album's final track, "All Stops Applied" gives you a painful wake-up call with distorted guitars and cymbal crashes before there's a glimmer of feedback, and then, like it began, it's all over. Walsh has not only established himself as his own entity outside of Pedro with this album, he's teased us with the blueprint for what could be an excellent full-length if he can ever tear himself away from his other endeavor. JB

Whippersnapper "Appearances Wear Thin" (Fueled By Ramen)- If you like Hot Water Music - and I don't know why you wouldn't - you should dig this band. Unlike Rydell, Whippersnapper are reminiscent of Gainesville's finest without blatant plagiarism. Musically, Whippersnapper (can you say this name without feeling really uncomfortable, or is it just me?) favor chunky stop-and-start type rhythms intermittent with melodic-punk explorations reminiscent of their one-time tour mates, Lagwagon. It's the just-swallowed-a-mouthful-of-gravel vocals, high-energy choruses, and technical ability (especially in the drummer dept.), that remind me of HWM. Whippersnapper's songs also have an overriding pop element that ultimately makes the band stand out from the droves of Warped Tour hopefuls. The songs on *Appearances Wear Thin* are catchy in a subtle way - after listening to this record you'll find these melodies floating around in your head, but won't be able to place where they came from. Well, according to their bio, they came from Peachtree City, Georgia. Doesn't that sound nice? JB

The White Octave "Menergy" (Initial Records) - I must admit that this turned out to be much better than I expected. That'll be a lesson to me - never judge an album by its cover. The White Octave incorporate everything from big grooves, thick bass lines, and glossy guitar melodies into their sound (usually in that order). At its best, this formula is exceptionally well-done, as in "The Constant Is Zero", which simply smokes. If you can listen to that song without bobbing your head at least a couple times, there's something seriously wrong with you, or your neck. This pattern repeats throughout the disc, but it is managed to be done in enough ways that it never gets too repetitive. This goes for everything, except the bass lines. Unfortunately, there's only slight variations in many of them,

and over time, this detracts from the album as a whole, as the bass is an integral part of their sound. If you're looking for evidence of this, it's most noticeable in the plodding "Move In Time". They shift gears a lot, from their most grooving songs to their slow, most contemplative songs, and back again. Above all, the album has plenty of replay value; the songs aren't very catchy. That can be a bad thing, but this also prevents it from getting old quickly. Each time I give it another listen, it's just like the first time I popped it in. On top of their grooves is a fantastic vocalist, one who immediately brings the late, great At The Drive-In to mind. In fact, now that I think about it, the similarity is way too blatant. Though, perhaps it can be argued that at least they bring an amazing band to mind, rather than a mediocre one. To sum it up, I like this fine, but most of time listening to this makes me want to put ATDI's first record on instead. TB

The White Stripes "White Blood Cells" (Sympathy for the Record Industry)- I'm sick of reading about the White Stripes, I'm sick of seeing the White Stripes on (M)TV, and I'm sick of seeing everything tainted through a red and white haze. I don't care if Meg and Jack White or husband and wife, brother and sister, or mom and dad. The record? The record isn't bad, but it ain't the masterpiece the media would like to make it out to be. The drumming is high school battle of the bands talent level and best, and while I've seen Jack White tear it up live, his playing on this album seems fairly reserved, eschewing fuzzed out extended solos for repetitive power chords or melody lines -- and believe me, this guy can rip it up like a true delta-bluesman. Unfortunately, this album is evidence that their music is moving further and further away from where it originated; and the transition for the garage to the Gap (did anyone see the MTV movie awards?) isn't going to be an easy one. Once all the hype dies down, let's hope they're back to rocking smoky rock clubs, instead of reminiscing over Ramen noodles and signed photos of Carson Daly. JB

Winepress "Complete Recordings" (Harmless)- Now here's someone I've never heard of before whatsoever- Winepress was an EXTREMELY young-looking Chicago band that dressed in clean-cut 50's "Buddy Holly" style and played hooky pop-punk. They also formed in 1992 and broke up in 1994, citing religious differences between the band members and their parents. Bizarre theological issues aside, this is pretty standard- boasting high-pitched vocals, lots of speed and pretty accurate guitars. Of course, it's certainly not bad for what it is, but this might fall under the "deserving of a discography" ruling. Their sound is certainly centered around an air of young naivete, a double-edged sword if there ever was one. Features some production by pop-punk everyman, Mass Giorgini. dup

Xiu Xiu "Knife Play" (5RC)- Whew! The artwork that accompanies this disc is inconsistent, and just flat out stinks. Inconsistent as well is the music. However, it's actually okay. It basically sounds like the lead singer of Simply Red decided he wanted to be in an art-noise-indie band from Olympia, Washington. The schizophrenic atmosphere the music dwells in tribal-esque percussion (I'm almost sure they didn't intend on the tribal thing). Aside the 'beeps', 'blips' and assorted distortion, the instrumentation reminds me of Talk Talk in their later stages. I'm not really sure what they're going for, and

it seems like they don't have a clue either. There's lots of room to either become more avant-garde or become super poppy. Hanging in the balance between the two extremes isn't doing Xiu Xiu any good. CT

Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs (Shifty) EP- Although their press sheet even proudly totes they've played with the Strokes, the White Stripes, and other ultra-hip rock-revivalist acts, the Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs, shouldn't be confused with their Lou Reed worshiping peers. The record's third tune, "Art Star," starts out sounding like Cake, kicks into a blast beat interlude reminiscent of Melt Banana, switches to a hokey "do-do-do-do-do-do-do", section, and then...back to the chaos. Considering the trio only has two instrumentalists, it's amazing how much dissonant noise these kids manage to create. Singer Karen O sounds like PJ Harvey if instead of hanging out in England she favored Olympia or Washington D.C. in the early nineties. She pleads, sighs, and trembles; shouting sexually charged mantras like "the bigger the better!" as the guitar zigzags in disjointed agreement. The drummer, Brian Chase (who is also in the Seconds) is a tad low in the mix for my taste, but I guess that's part of the charm of the lo-fi sound, right? In the end, the Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs are cool enough for hipsters without sacrificing originality for nostalgia's sake. JB

Zolof "The Rock and Roll Destroyer" (Wonka Vision)- The second release from Wonka Vision Fanzine's record label isn't a bad one at all. Zolof- a band that has one of the best band-name/album-title pairs I've ever heard even though they spelled it wrong (what do they call their second record, come to think of it? How about Zolof: "More Effective than Prozac")- have moments where they really shine as a light-hearted and endearing girl-boy pop-rock band and moments where I totally forget they're playing through my headphones. To put it simply, Zolof's brand of moog infused rock reminds you of the best band that played at your high school: they weren't bad song writers by any means and their songs still impress me years later, but the sad truth is that we should have written a few more songs before they decided to release a record. I'd say the first half of the record- while it has definite flaws like a somewhat flat recording quality and a drummer whose style doesn't always mesh well with the rest of the instrumentation- is remarkably catchy and fun. If they had stopped there and not even bothered to play the last 4 songs then this would have been good from start to finish. As it stands now, it's good emotional pop from start to six. Overall a strong release, and I eagerly await further releases from this outfit! RS

# seafood

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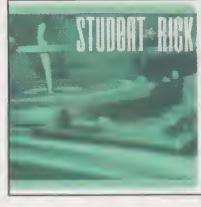
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